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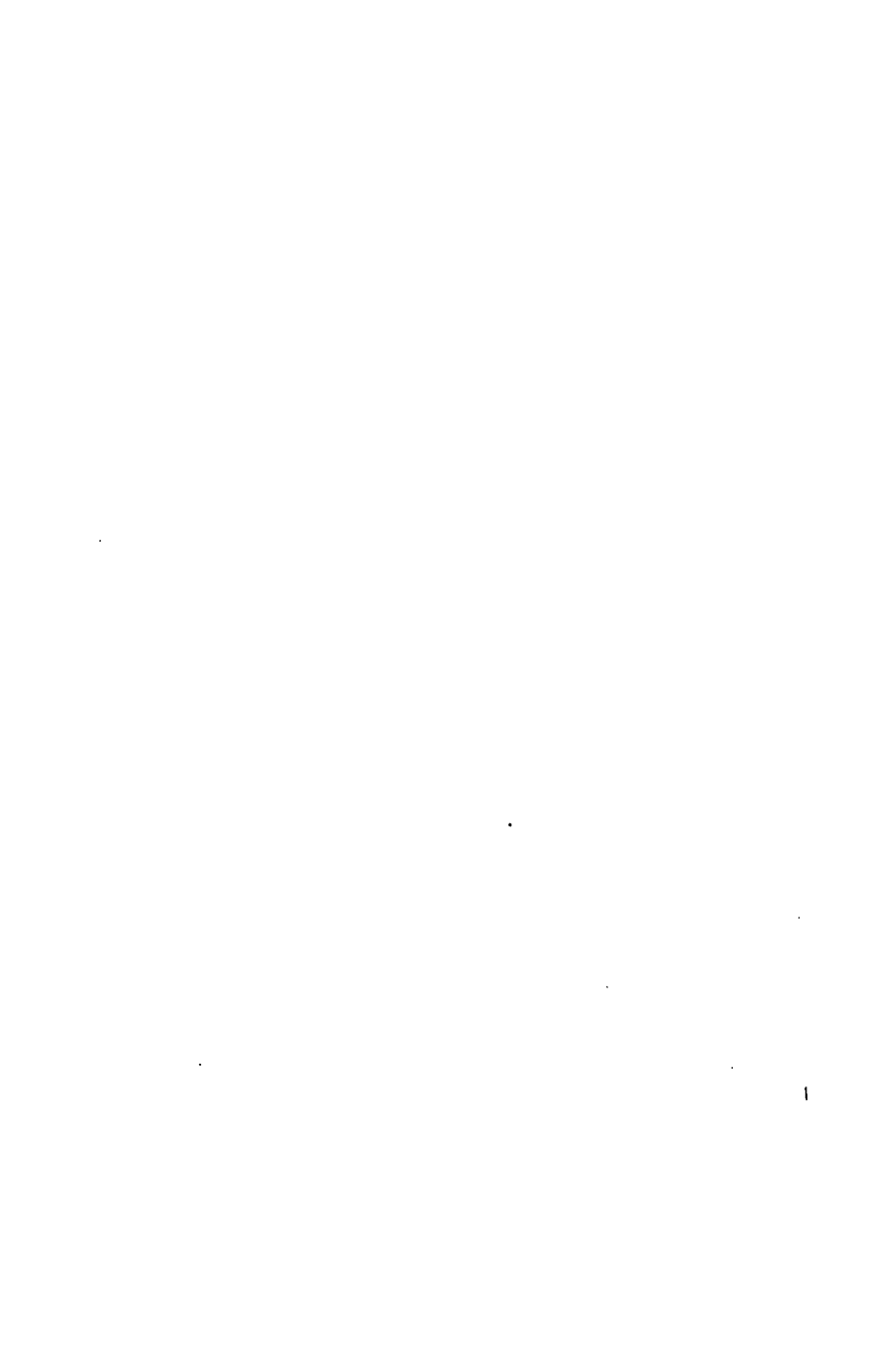
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THE
DOWAGER COUNTESS
AND THE
AMERICAN GIRL

BY
LILIAN BELL
AUTHOR OF "SIR JOHN AND THE AMERICAN GIRL"
"THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF AN OLD MAID"
"THE EXPATRIATES" ETC.



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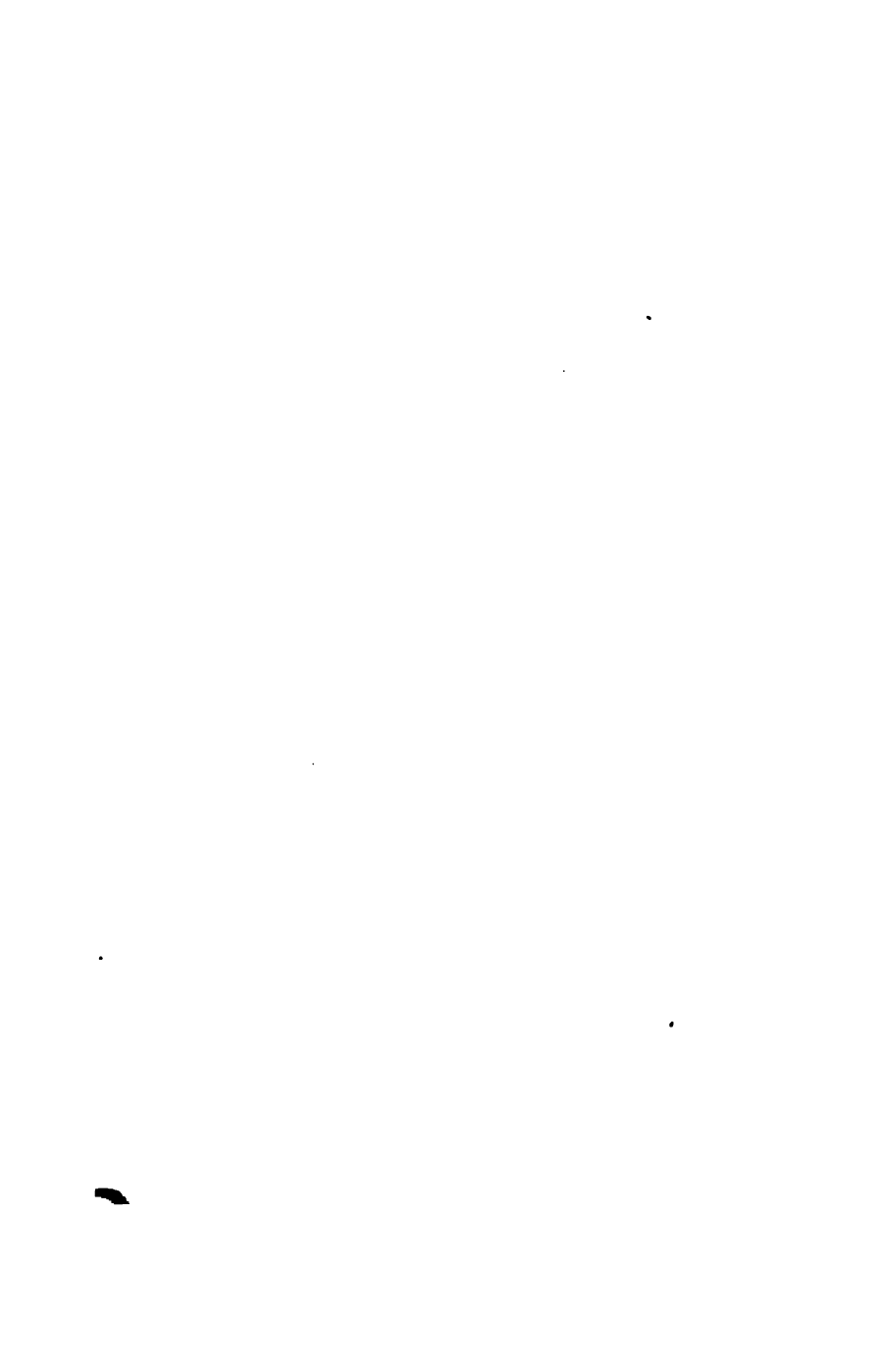
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Published June, 1903.

TO
MY FRIEND
ALFRED ELY, ESQ.
WHO WAS THE FIRST TO SUGGEST
THIS SEQUEL TO
"SIR JOHN AND THE AMERICAN GIRL"



**THE DOWAGER COUNTESS AND
THE AMERICAN GIRL**



THE DOWAGER COUNTESS AND THE AMERICAN GIRL

CHAPTER I

WHEN he saw from her letters that the Dowager Countess of Mayhew was determined to be nasty about her son Archibald's marriage to the American girl, and Sir John Chartersea realized that by seeing them safely married in Rome, after their somewhat stormy courtship in Cairo, he had largely taken things into his own hands, he naturally felt his responsibility in the affair. He felt it the more because he knew the dowager of old, and next to his own wife, Lady Chartersea, the dowager was considered to be the most terrible old woman in the county.

It had been much against his will (for Sir John was of a sanguine temperament, in

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spite of experience which should have taught him better) that he was at last convinced that the dowager had taken no account of his wedding present of five thousand pounds to dower the portionless bride, and that she was planning at sight to be even nastier to her American daughter-in-law than she had been in her letters.

But Sir John was a man who, having put his hand to the plough, never turned back. Besides this characteristic, he was an Englishman, and the English are a race which, while perhaps not exactly stubborn, are, at least, firm. Therefore Lady Chartersea, having been reduced almost to a pulp by the extravagance of such a wedding present, was further anguished to discover that Sir John had, during the honey-moon, quietly and unostentatiously established himself the bride's champion, defender, and haven of refuge whenever the dowager's letters grew too unbearable. Such conduct on Sir John's part portended future vexation to the none-too-amiable Lady Chartersea when they got back to England.

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Sir John possessed, in spite of his worldly wisdom and keen old tongue, the kindest of hearts. He was, in addition, the embodiment of old English chivalry—that chivalry which, although filtered down through generations of mixed blood, is the proudest heritage of the American man of to-day and the gift of the gods American women have most cause to be grateful for.

The dowager countess was proud—proud and poor, a combination which always creates trouble wherever it is found. And as an explanation for the unpleasantness of her letters to her young and sensitive daughter-in-law, recently orphaned and a stranger in a strange land, it can only be asserted as a fact open to dispute that most women are cats at heart, but few, fortunately, feel at liberty to allow their cattishness full play. Those few are women whose social position is so hopelessly low that they feel free to gibe at those above them, and those whose position is sufficiently high and assured not to care what anybody thinks of them.

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To this latter class the dowager countess belonged.

Nor was it the most auspicious hour for Edith Joyce to have married a younger son, for the situation, always strained, was just now undergoing a particular tension, as the result of the curious will left by the late earl, Archie's father.

His elder brother, Geoffrey, the present Earl of Mayhew, had never been a favorite with their father, and his extravagance had so reduced the old earl's income that he took a dying revenge against his son, and left all his personal property in trust for the first male heir of the Earl and Countess of Mayhew, leaving as little ready money as he could both to his wife, the dowager countess, and to his elder son. Only the entailed property, that which he could not possibly control, went to Geoffrey. To his second son, Archie, he left three thousand a year.

This will seemed bad enough when it was read, but hope was strong that the heir would soon make his appearance and clear the atmosphere as well as the estate; but

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just a week before the news of Archie's marriage to his American bride was wired from Rome, Tessie had presented her liege lord and her august mother-in-law with twin girls, which made six, if you please, in seven years.

Certainly, under the circumstances (one pair of twins and four odd ones), one would think poor Tessie not to blame, she having, according to an Americanism of Sir John's, "put in her best licks." But the dowager thought differently, and she therefore made a journey to Sudleigh, their place in Sussex, purposely to see Tessie and tell her what she thought of her, which she did with such a freedom and directness of speech that poor Tessie went into convulsions and nearly lost her life.

As for the dowager, the interview had benefited her. It had relieved a certain nervous tension, and she declared she felt better for her visit. She knitted her way back to Mintern Court, firm in the resolution not to pin her faith to that ungrateful Tessie any longer, but to arrange a wealthy match for

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Archie. She was strengthened in this resolve by her own observations of Mayhew's increasing flesh and his apoplectic appearance. Her husband, the late earl, had died of apoplexy, as well as his younger brother. Mayhew was sadly like both of them. It was just as well to be prepared for an emergency, the dowager reflected, and get Archie safely married to money.

The following week, a joyous wire from Sir John announced Archie's marriage in Rome to "the American girl" the dowager had so dreaded in Cairo.

With that, the dowager went into such a purple rage that her own seven daughters, whose numbers should have made her gentle to poor Tessie's exaggerations in that line, found it expedient to keep out of their mother's way. As for the dowager, she fell upon Tessie again. This was probably because she could not get at the bride. But the bride was coming, never fear! They were in London even now, and each hour was bringing her nearer and nearer to the welcome awaiting her at Mintern Court,

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where they were to stay until their own house could be prepared to receive them.

Edith had never been in England. Her invalid mother had died in the South a year previous, and she had gone North to live with her uncle upon an income which supported her in more than comfort. But Edith was a keen-witted, eager, sensitive young girl, with an unusual power of observation and a glorious sense of humor, which very often got her into trouble with the dull. She was not particularly happy in her uncle's family, so she hailed with delight the prospect of travel in company with the redoubtable Mrs. Richards, a not more unfortunate choice than most travelling companions prove, and straightway the two set off for a tour of the Mediterranean, when in Cairo she met and fell in love with Archie Caven-dish.

She possessed an illuminating imagination of the rare sort which could project itself into another's personality and obtain his point of view. It made her eminently lovable to the clever and broad-minded, but it

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unfortunately added to her unhappy reputation for cleverness and antagonized the stupid.

It endeared her to Sir John. He, in fact, adored her, and openly declared and paraded the fact, to his wife's chagrin, but to everybody's else amusement, for Lady Chartersea was neither lovable nor popular. She and the dowager countess were life-long friends, if so bloodless and pale a companionship may be dignified by that virile name.

Neither Sir John nor the earl had been happy in their marriages, although Sir John was much the finer and nobler man of the two. Sir John, for example, would have been incapable of the *post-mortem* cruelty of the earl's will. His nature was larger, grander, more generous, and more forgiving. But they had always been devoted friends, drawn together, not only from their adjoining estates, but the similarity of their wives. These wives differed, however, in this, that whereas Lady Chartersea was devoted to Sir John, and pampered him as only an Englishwoman can pamper and slave for a man, the

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dowager countess had early seen the futility of such a course with her sterner husband, and had ordained her life separately, with little regard to his pleasure and comfort, except for a fervent respect in words, as became an English wife and mother.

But, always a despot to women and servile to men, the dowager developed, after her husband's death, into something of a bully. She possessed a certain amount of tact, but her appearance was formidable, and she had acquired that unaccountable ascendancy over the lives of her women relatives which one sometimes observes without apparent cause except, perhaps, long precedence and the wholesome fear of a family quarrel.

In this manner, wholly against tradition, the dowager had managed to obtain Mintern Court for a residence, instead of retiring to Dower House, the smaller estate provided for dowager countesses of Mayhew. She had come with her seven daughters to visit Tessie at Mintern while Tessie was a bride. Tessie, being dowerless, although the daughter of Sir William Vargrave, and with no end

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of fashionable relations, the dowager had terrorized her thoroughly and completely. In addition, measles broke out among the seven daughters, and Tessie, always timid, fled with her husband, leaving the dowager in possession. The measles progressed slowly through the seven, and were followed by lingering disorders which would have made the removal of the Mayhews a cruelty. Therefore they stayed on. When they were completely recovered, the dowager invited Tessie down for a visit, but, instead of taking a bold stand, then and there, and asserting herself once for all, Tessie weakly acquiesced, and found herself a guest in one of her own houses, assigned to a suite of guest-chambers, while the dowager and her girls were discovered ensconced in the family rooms.

This was a *coup d'état* for the dowager. She was trembling in her shoes for fear Tessie would assert herself, but when she found how Tessie took it, instead of gratitude for her daughter-in-law's amiability, the dowager frankly despised her for her want of spirit,

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and immediately took steps to put her further into subjection.

Thus it was that Edith paid her respects to her husband's mother at Mintern Court instead of Dower House.

CHAPTER II

ON the afternoon of the arrival of the bride and groom, after dawdling away their honey-moon in Italy, the month of May showed the arrival of the lovely English spring.

Mintern Court was an historic but forbidding pile of gray stone, with turrets and towers and cold floors and winding passages calculated to set fire to an enthusiastic American's blood.

Like many another American woman, Edith had always thirsted for ancestors. As her eyes travelled eagerly over stately, ivy-covered Mintern, her heart throbbed with pride to realize that now she, too, belonged to English history—she had a place in tradition—she had attained to that proudest of proud positions, an earl's daughter. And because her disposition was sweet, be-

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cause she loved her husband very tenderly and deeply, she determined not to allow herself to be prejudiced against her new mother—the only mother she could claim—for all she had written so insultingly not only to Archie and herself, but, most humiliating of all, to the Charterseas.

At first she had shrunk from going to Mintern, and had begged to stay in London, where they were being handsomely entertained, until Fernleigh could be made ready for them, but Sir John and Archie, and even Robert Gordon, Lady Chartersea's brother, had flouted the idea, and urged her to "buck up" and show the dowager her spirit.

Thus encouraged, Edith had "bucked up," and was even now being ushered into the library of Mintern by the old butler, whose expression, as he welcomed her husband, was sufficient for Edith's susceptible nature. Metaphorically speaking, she then and there took Jepson to her heart.

There was no one in the library, although it was time for tea. The room was damp and chilly, albeit a fire was vainly endeavor-

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ing to make itself felt. Archie looked around anxiously.

"Let Lady Mayhew know we are come, Jepson," he said.

The butler looked up.

"I thought you knew, sir," he said, apologetically. "Lady Mayhew is from home. She left Mintern this morning, sir."

"From home!" exclaimed Archie, involuntarily. Then he recollected himself. "I had not heard. Where is she, Jepson?"

"She didn't say, sir. She said to say, when you arrived, that she was from home. She said you would understand."

Archie's face colored slowly. His blue eyes grew dangerously black.

"Are my sisters here?" he asked, sharply.

"Yes, sir, but—"

"Desire them to come down immediately," said Archie, quietly, but with a note in his voice which Edith never heard before.

Jepson bowed and left the room.

Cavendish thrust his hands deep into his pockets and crossed the room to his wife.

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But Edith, after one look into his face, exclaimed, eagerly:

"Oh, Archie, what a beautiful old room! I never dreamed it would be so lovely as this. What millions of books, and how well used the place looks. Oh, if you could see some of the American libraries I know!"

Her husband stared at her. Hadn't she heard Jepson? Didn't she understand that his mother was deliberately insulting them? Or wasn't she sensitive? He bent to look into her face. She was white around the nostrils, and her eyes were bright as with a fever. Her cheeks and lips burned scarlet.

Then the man knew and worshipped her.

"Tell me," she went on, a little breathlessly, "was your father proud of all this? Did he live much of his life here? It seems to me as if he must have. It associates itself at once with the way I think of him."

"How clever — no, how sympathetic — you are, dearest! Yes, this was his favorite room. He greatly added to the collection of books, and all these early prints, most rare they are, were his. He and Sir John have

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spent years of their lives within these four walls."

"Sir John!" cried Edith. "I was sure of it. I can see them! They wrangled, didn't they?"

"Fairly fought, sometimes, yet loved each other as men sometimes do—through everything."

Jepson entered, with a deprecating cough.

"Miss Inchworthy sends her compliments, sir, and says that her ladyship left word, as the young ladies are not at all well this spring, that they are to drink their tea and have no excitement, but go quietly to bed. The doctor's orders, I believe, sir."

Archie did not stir from Edith's side, but she felt his arm, which was touching hers, stiffen.

"Jepson, my compliments to Miss Inchworthy, and tell her I desire her presence and that of the young ladies in the library in ten minutes. If the young ladies have retired, desire them to dress at once and join us at tea. Be so good, Jepson, as to send tea in immediately. Mrs. Cavendish is

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greatly in need of it. You get my message, Jepson?"

"Yes, sir. Perfectly, sir. Miss Inchworthy shall be informed at once, sir."

In less than ten minutes they came—in fact, it seemed to Edith that Miss Inchworthy and her seven charges must have been concealed behind the door, so immediately did they appear.

Edith was well-bred, but, I repeat, she had never been in England before, therefore her breeding was severely strained not to give more than a smile of amiability as one, two, three, four, five, six, seven tall girls, dressed alike, looking alike, walking alike, bowing alike, came up to her like going down a flight of steps, each ash-colored head a few inches shorter than the ash-colored head preceding, each pair of pale eyes fluttering with exactly the same flutter, each right hand damp with the same dampness of all the others.

It was so deadly, unspeakably funny that, as the seven were passing in review before Archie, Edith bent over the fire to conceal an irrepressible nervous giggle,

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which instantly smothered itself in a polite cough.

Then she straightened up and ventured another look at them.

After a consulting glance at the governess, they had ranged themselves in a stiff row.

Jepson was bringing tea. Edith looked around wildly.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked. "Archie, push some chairs nearer the fire for your sisters and Miss Inchworthy."

Although Archie turned obediently, eight shocked pairs of eyes were fastened upon the bride, and Jepson and the footman sprang to assist him.

In great trepidation the girls were finally seated.

Miss Inchworthy whispered to the eldest girl, who turned immediately to Edith.

"Did you have a comfortable journey?" she asked.

The governess nodded approvingly.

"Oh yes, very," answered Edith. "I have never before seen an English spring. It is almost too beautiful."

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No one replied.

Miss Inchworthy coughed reprovingly. The second girl started nervously, and, with an apprehensive glance at the cougher, said:

"I am very glad you had a comfortable journey."

"Thank you," said Edith, gently. She smiled at the second girl, and the second girl, after a timid appeal to Miss Inchworthy, smiled in return and colored pink clear up to her ash-colored hair.

"Edith," said Archie, "will you pour tea, or are you too tired?"

"I am not in the least tired," said Edith.

She rose and went to the tea-table, eight pairs of eyes following her pretty figure and well-poised head with interest. Her black gown fitted her slim waist to perfection and spread around her feet in lines of grace and elegance which the girls had never seen before. Her lovely auburn hair was dressed as thousands of American girls dress theirs, without the slightest dread that an English girl could ever copy it, even though she saw it done every day. Just a loose puff, just

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a dexterous twist, just a push forward over the forehead by a skilled hand—the fewer hair-pins the better—a final touch of a wide comb, and there you are, with your hair done as no one in all this world can do it, except just the girls who live under the stars and stripes. The sleek undulation of the French, and the fussy fringe of the English, with their eternal invisible nets and inevitable bun, never can hope to compete with the airy grace and the irresistible and unmistakable style of the head of a well-groomed American girl.

In a dim way the seven sisters watching Edith felt this. She seemed by her rounded slimness to accentuate their awkwardness. Her small wrists and narrow feet made their thick ankles and stout boots more than ever conspicuous. They thought her extremely beautiful and her manner very gentle and kind as she, by dint of much coaxing, finally extracted from them the information that they took three lumps of sugar each. They thought her simply fascinating when, with a little smile, she put a fourth in their saucers,

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and Inchworthy did not forbid their slipping it into their sirupy tea.

Still their mother's cautions told. They felt that this charm was the charm of evil, and this fascination was something to watch and pray over as a temptation of the devil. The American was like a forbidden French novel to them. They would dearly have loved to meet her advances and dip into her at will, but they were wholesomely afraid of the contamination she would be to them.

Their brother sat looking at them with eyes which had been cultivated by two months of close companionship with his American wife. If he had not known Edith, he would have taken them as a matter of course, and not noticed them more than usual. They were, after all, quite like other English girls who were still in the school-room. But now he looked at them with amazement. Surely Inchworthy was cruel to caricature them with such clothes and such manners. But, as he looked at the governess, he reflected that poor Inchworthy was incapable of the imagination of a

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caricature or of comprehending one if she saw it.

The seven ladies were so plainly anguished by the situation that their brother released them as soon as the tea was over, and Inchworthy piloted them hurriedly back to safety.

But with their disappearance Archie's embarrassment returned. He pulled at his mustache, dug his hands into his pockets, knocked down the fire-irons, and gave so many other signs of perturbation that Edith, who was a great believer in taking the bull by the horns, finally tucked her hand under his arm and said:

"Never mind, Archie, dear. I know how you feel—I know how I should feel in your place. Your mother has behaved outrageously in her endeavor to show her displeasure, so why not admit it and be done with it? I don't believe in dodging about and pretending you don't see a thing which is as flagrant as this. But don't allow it to spoil your home-coming, for it is home to you if it isn't to me, and, above everything, never

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let her see that we were annoyed or even surprised. In the mean time, I am free to admit that, apart from her rudeness, I am glad not to be obliged to face her until I am rested. And oh, Archie, could we look at the house to-night—all by ourselves? I would so love to explore it with candles!"

Her tall husband smiled down at her and patted the hand on his arm.

"Your way is best, dear. I feel so relieved, now that I see how you are taking it. But don't imagine, because I can't talk about it, that I am not awfully cut up. I've always known that my mother had her faults, but she has her good qualities, too, and I have always been able to respect her. But her behavior since our marriage has lowered her in my esteem more than I like to realize, and more than I would have believed possible. It is—it is an awful thing, Edith, when a parent deliberately does a thing which loses her the respect of a child! I never realized the—how shall I say it?—the obligation which rests upon parents to live up to certain conventions or traditions

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which must compel their children's respect. I swear to you, Edith, I feel most awfully cut up—for my mother, you understand—on her account. She has lost ground with me so immeasurably. She has lost a place in my esteem which she can never regain. I feel bowled over, by Jove, to discover what sort of a woman she is!"

"Poor Archie," said Edith. "You take away half the sting of her actions by the unmistakable way in which you array yourself on my side. I was afraid, from the idea I gleaned of you in Egypt, that you would prefer loyalty to your family to loyalty to anybody else on earth—even a wife—"

"Stop a moment, Edith. I try to be just. I believe I am just, and, in this case, there seems to me to be but one side to take, and that is your side. My mother has not a leg to stand on. She is wholly in the wrong. In Cairo—well, that was different. You must see how different it was to this case. You know I am no good at expressing myself, but you understand."

"Well, don't dwell on it any more. We

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understand each other, and we will bear it as best we can and—”

“And we’ll get out at the earliest possible moment, won’t we, little woman?”

“We will, indeed.”

“Now, there’s the dressing-bell. Come along. And after dinner, armed with candles—”

“We’ll explore,” cried Edith, with such enthusiasm that Archie’s brow cleared, and Edith thought the worst was over, but twenty minutes later he rapped on her door and stood on the threshold in his shirt-sleeves, wrestling with his tie, to say, with a threatening wag of his blond head:

“Not that I sha’n’t give her a good talking to—a regular wiggling—on account of this, for I shall.”

Then he closed the door again, and when he emerged finally he said no more.

Theirs was a merry dinner, full of laughter and freedom from restraint, and a complete satisfaction to Jepson, whose face relaxed as he served his young master, until, under some, he might have lost his place for smiling.

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And after dinner they explored indeed, Edith making so lovely a picture in her satin gown, the exact color of her hair, with the amber necklace, bracelets, and stomacher, the stones of which Archie had got for her in Egypt and had cut and mounted in Paris, that when she held her candle above her head, the better to examine a tapestry or old painting, Archie forgot everything but to look at her and admire her and wonder at her loveliness, and he was only recalled by hot wax spilled on his hand from his own candle.

They had made a hasty tour of the more interesting parts of Mintern, and were loitering in the picture-gallery, when the sound of carriage-wheels and a hurried running to the door of the younger footman revealed the fact that the dowager countess had returned.

Archie and Edith were on the stairs in the act of descending to the library again when this occurred, and almost immediately the hearty and welcome sound of Sir John Chartersea's voice so amazed them that, without

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waiting to be summoned, they came on down directly.

The dowager retired to the library without a word.

"Why, whatever in the world—" began Archie, going up to Sir John.

"Never better, Archie! I assure you, I was never better. In fact, I feel like a new man. And, Edith, meh girl, you look like an etching—a beautiful artist-proof etching, signed by the hand of a master!"

"Dear Sir John," laughed Edith.

Archie dismissed the footman at a sign from Sir John, and then the old man said, in a low tone:

"I haven't enjoyed mehself so much in years. Archie, meh boy, you'll forgive me, I know, for I can see by your face that the blood of your father, the old fighting Mayhew blood, is up. Listen. I found her at Arlesworth. She had come over, if you please, to welcome *us*. Fancy! Leaving you and Edith to get on as best you could without a welcome, except from the servants and the dogs! I saw the whole thing

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in a moment, and, without saying a word, I ordered the horses put to, and I told her to put on her bonnet, and I fetched her home. By Jove! I never gave her a chance. I fetched her home. Meh wife is furious. But I fetched Lady Mayhew home, by the Lord Harry! And, Archie, I can see it in your eye that you were going to have your say out with her. But if you will let your father's friend advise you—I wouldn't. The fact is, old man, I talked to her a little mehself, and I haven't left anything to say!"

Sir John laughed until he choked, and Archie was obliged to thump him on the back to bring him to. His keen, old, blue eyes twinkled as they rested on his little American girl.

As Archie turned to lead the way into the library, Sir John stopped and whispered in Edith's ear:

"She's always needed just what she got to-night. Poor Mayhew never dared, but I've avenged him at last. I give you meh word, I haven't enjoyed mehself so much

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in years. Now, then, go in and speak to her. Has Archie told you she was google-eyed?"

Edith was in the open doorway as this last whisper reached her. It was too late to retreat, for the dowager had spied her and was holding out her hand. She was, indeed, "google-eyed"—that is to say, her pale, bulging eyes seldom seemed to have the same intention at the same time, so that, in their rolling, they gave a stranger the impression that she could see behind her.

Sir John was in such spirits that he was plainly delighted by Edith's confusion, for she was trembling visibly in her effort not to break into hysterical laughter. The countess was slightly mollified by her agitation, which she set down to Edith's knowledge of her position.

"You must be tired, mother," said Archie, when the first awkward greetings were over. "Won't you have a glass of port and a biscuit?"

"I have not even dined," said the dowager.

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"No, she wouldn't stay. Meh wife begged her to," said Sir John, "but after she had seen with her own two eyes that Robert and Jane hadn't brought me home a corpse, nothing would do but she must hurry right home to welcome you two."

Edith bit her lip, for behind the dowager's back Sir John was twisting his face into contortions.

"Then you must have something immediately," said Archie, with the concern an Englishman always feels at the tragedy of any one's not having dined.

"I'll have a bit of cold toast and a cup of hot water in my room presently," said the dowager, bridling with a sense of ill-usage under which some women thrive. "I have no appetite, as perhaps you will remember. You have dined, I suppose?"

"Oh, hours ago! And had tea, also, with Miss Inchworthy and my sisters."

"Inchworthy! Your sisters!" exclaimed the dowager.

"Yes, mother, by my express desire," said her son, meeting the look in her eyes, which

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threatened Inchworthy, with one in his own which threatened her.

The dowager hesitated, then retreated in good order.

"Oh, very good," she said. "I am glad Edith was welcomed—suitably."

With which graceful remark she took leave of them.

"Sir John," said Edith, to break the silence which followed, "you are not thinking of returning to Arlesworth to-night?"

"I intended to, Edith, but I find I am not up to it, so I'll beg Archie, here, to give me a bed, and I'll go back to -morrow. If you'll tell Jepson to give the orders to my men, Archie, I'll be obliged to you."

CHAPTER III

WHO shall describe an American girl's first impressions of the mental delights and the physical discomforts of life in an old English country-house where money for improvements has not been forthcoming?

Edith possessed more than her share of enthusiasm, but peacocks on the terrace soon failed to compensate her for stone floors and cold corridors; and portraits of illustrious Mayhew ancestors never made up to her for the lack of even one rocking-chair. Perhaps they might have done so, if the dowager had proved kind, but her manner, especially when she was alone with Edith, was hard to bear, and while the coldness of the Mayhew stones penetrated her foolish little American boots and slippers, the coldness of the Mayhew welcome penetrated still further into her foolish little American

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heart, so that between them both Edith was quite wretched.

Edith was almost as sorry for Archie's seven sisters as she was for herself, and she blushed for them when she heard the dowager lament to every visitor, and in their presence, of the difficulty of marrying them off. The prospects of obtaining husbands for them was the burning question always in the mind and on the tongue of their mother, and the poor girls were obliged to listen to the discussion as if they were so many puppets who had no sensibilities to be shocked.

Silence was no defence for Edith from the dowager's attacks. Her mobile American face was too eloquent. Once when the Charterseas and Robert Gordon had driven over from Arlesworth, and they were all, the girls and Miss Inchworthy included, having their tea together, the dowager turned on Edith, saying:

"And what are your eyes flashing for, Edith? Perhaps you don't approve of the conversation?"

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"I was not aware that my eyes were flashing," said Edith, quietly.

"Now, mother," put in Archie, pacifically.

"One moment, Archie, if you please. Perhaps Edith will explain why she permits her face so palpably to express disapproval of your mother's conversation with a friend?"

"I am sure that I was not aware that my face expressed disapproval," said Edith.

"Then you decline to answer my question — a civil question, civilly put?" asked the dowager, fixing at least one eye upon her daughter-in-law.

"Not at all," said Edith, with the courage of desperation. "Since you are so *exigente*, I will say that I was thinking how differently we manage things in America."

"*In-deed!*" said the dowager, bringing her other eye into view. Lady Chartersea put up her glass.

"And how, may I ask," said Lady Chartersea, nobly coming to her friend's rescue, "do they manage marriage for a family of seven daughters in America?"

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Edith laughed irresistibly.

"The true answer to that is quite simple," she said, with a smile which should have disarmed spite incarnate. "People seldom have a family of seven daughters to provide for. I don't know one—I don't know of a family in all my acquaintance in America—with seven daughters."

"I," said Lady Mayhew, "am one of a family of ten—all girls. Lady Chartersea, how many daughters had your mother? Eight, was it not? Eight! Yes. And Tessie has six already."

"I know," said Edith. "I believe such large families are quite the rule in England."

"However," pursued the dowager, "you have not yet done me the honor to answer my question."

"Well," said Edith, "if a woman had so many, she would not, I am sure, allow it to trouble her much, for the entire seven would doubtless manage the whole thing for themselves, and only talk it over with their parents when everything was settled, or, at

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least, only waiting for their approval to become so."

"Upon my word!" said Lady Chartersea, in tones of the liveliest disapproval.

"Still," persisted Lady Mayhew, with an evil smile, "permit me still to repeat, with what patience I may, my original question, which still remains unanswered. Your face expressed—"

"Since you drive me into what you may consider a discourtesy," said Edith, with a glance into Sir John's beaming face, "I will answer you. I was distressed for your daughters—for their mortification in having their chances of 'securing a husband'—your very words—discussed publicly. I—I never have listened to such a conversation before, and I—well, I felt for them."

It was out at last. Edith glanced at the seven ladies to see how they had taken her unexpected and most unwarranted championship of their delicacy of feeling, but she was nonplussed by their expression of undisguised amazement. Plainly this view of the subject had never occurred to them be-

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fore. Not to hear their chances of securing husbands discussed? And why not, pray?

Sir John eased the tension of the moment by bursting out laughing.

"Such a game of cross purposes!" he cried. "Lady Mayhew, you can no more understand Edith's point of view than if you were a Hottentot. Why, you should have seen her in Cairo, and on the dock of the Austrian Lloyd at Brindisi, and at the Grand Hôtel in Rome. We were never without an odd man or two trying to get a word with her. Archie nearly had to elope with her, after all. And most of the other American girls we saw were the same objects of attention. Gad! We approved of their taste, Robert and I."

"Archie was a lucky dog to have got Edith," drawled Robert Gordon, lazily. "I am quite sure she could have had several others."

Now, every one knows how exasperating it is to have some woman, whom we are browbeating, championed by men, and particularly by men whom we respect and whom we have no wish to offend. Every

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one knows how such championship increases our ill-temper against the offensive and offending woman, and how we inwardly determine to take it out on her privately, and as soon as may be. It was, no doubt, injudicious for Sir John and Robert Gordon to come to Edith's rescue in that manner. Women have been poisoned, murdered, disfigured for life for no more than the crime of being unwisely championed by a man. But Sir John and Robert Gordon did not think of these things, nor their equivalents in civilized England and America. They simply, as Englishmen, loved fair play, and if you had asked them why they interfered, they would probably have said it was their custom to go to the rescue of the under dog.

Edith's one comfort during the first few days of her stay at Mintern Court had been to drive to Fernleigh to oversee the improvements. Fernleigh was Archie's own property, left him by his father, and lay midway between Mintern and Arlesworth. It was only a cottage, albeit rather a pretentious one, but simple, indeed, compared

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to the estates which had descended through entail to Geoffrey and Tessie.

But to Edith it was a paradise. The girl possessed not only an artistic eye and delicate taste, but she had, what is more rare, a genius for home-making. Both Archie and Sir John had written these things enthusiastically to the dowager, in their eager attempts to make her like her new daughter, but in their zeal they had only succeeded in placing a new weapon in the hands of the enemy.

Let men not read this simple tale, for to women alone belongs the gift of being able to appreciate how one woman is capable of torturing another through small things. Our grandmothers in New England made use of two words which have grown provincial if not obsolete. They are "hector" and "pester," and both aptly describe the process now known to the present generation as "torment" and "devil." To say that the dowager devilled Edith is to make the process prominent enough for a man to see and resent. But to say that she hectored her is

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to indicate that the process was so sly that a slightly stupid and unobservant man (as our dear Archie undoubtedly was, in spite of being a tender-hearted and just man when a wrong was flagrant enough to attract his attention) would go quite unobserved by him, and would only appeal to a man of the wit and penetration of Sir John Chartersea.

Edith and Archie, full of enthusiasm about their future home, had purchased in Paris dainty chintzes for the walls of Fernleigh, and, aided by endless plans drawn by Archie and hours of description, Edith had so excellent a comprehension of the place that, even the first time she saw it she found it to be quite like the idea she had formed of it.

Much to Lady Chartersea's annoyance, while in Paris, Sir John had often insisted upon going shopping with the Cavendishes, for, knowing his eagerness to be in their society, the bride and groom had unselfishly included him in many of their honey-moon plans, and had borne with Lady Chartersea in order to give Sir John pleasure. The old

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man was gratefully convinced of this, and while occasionally driven by his own sense of the fitness of things into leaving them for a week, or allowing them time to escape for a few days, at their first suggestion for rejoining the two parties, Sir John was so eager to accept, and so touchingly appreciative for their unselfishness, that they practically kept together the entire time, although Sir John wrenched himself away to another hotel religiously at every stopping-place.

It was almost easy for Edith to submit to this, for the sight of Sir John's eager old face as the young people joined him after each little separation was too much for her. She had not the heart to leave him, even on her honey-moon.

In this rare exhibition of unselfishness she builded better than she knew, as presently you shall hear, but in all unconsciousness, albeit Lady Chartersea once called her "an artful hussy" in Sir John's hearing, and nearly lost her life in consequence, for Sir John's temper was something quite frightful. She never ventured, after that, to allow Sir

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John to know her opinion of Archie's American wife.

The first two visits Edith paid to Fernleigh were unproductive of results. Workmen, ordered by Lady Mayhew, were in half of the rooms, scraping off the old paper and generally preparing the house for the new.

Then Edith was taken ill with a severe cold, caught in the draughts and damps of Mintern, and, to her surprise and remorse, Lady Mayhew was most solicitous. She insisted upon Edith's keeping her bed, and she dosed her with such villanous concoctions that the medicine completed an illness which the cold began, so that for two weeks Edith was unable to leave the house.

Archie, in the mean time, had been summoned to London for several days on business, so that it happened that the dowager was the only one upon whom Edith could depend for news of Fernleigh. She reported a progress slow but sure.

One bright morning, soon after Archie's return, Edith declared herself well enough to drive to Fernleigh.

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At first she was touched by Lady Mayhew's anxious admonitions and scarcely veiled determination to alarm Archie into keeping her in-doors for another day or two. Edith was an unsuspecting creature, and was constantly expecting the dowager to tire of her petty persecutions and to like her. Edith was accustomed to be liked. She could not remember having been actively disliked by anybody in the world except Lady Mayhew and Lady Chartersea. Of course, numbers of her acquaintances were not enthusiastic about her, because she was too clever for them; but as to hating her, why, nobody did; therefore her mother-in-law's actions were new and disagreeable experiences for her.

It is truly amazing, when one comes to think of it, how eager we are to see the good points in possible husbands for our daughters and how we hate our son's wives even before we see them. We choose our friends at our own good pleasure and lavish our precious love upon them, but in-laws, like greatness, are thrust upon us, and what is more natural

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than a desire to torment them into early graves or lunatic asylums? You may say what you please, cover it up, hide it, pretend that it may be true of others but not of you, veneer it in a thin politeness which will stand the strain of an afternoon tea, but which rubs through in a three weeks' visit, but the truth is that there is very little love lost between in-laws of any description. Tradition tells us that it has infrequently existed, but the parties to it are all dead long ago.

But while Edith had arrived at these conclusions, she was somewhat suspicious of Lady Mayhew's attentions, inasmuch as they only related to her not going to Fernleigh, and relaxed unaccountably when she had gained her point. This time, however, Edith, heroically backed by Archie, persisted in going.

Instead of the dog-cart, they took the carriage, and piled their chintzes on the opposite seat in wild but subdued excitement. They need not have troubled, however, as Lady Mayhew had retired in dignity to her

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own apartments and left them to defy her advice at their discretion.

It was a lovely day, as lovely as only England can be when she tries herself. The sun shone, the flowers bloomed, the breezes blew just as sun and flowers and breezes should do to make us happy, and Edith and Archie nobly did their part.

It added greatly to their pleasure, just as they drove up to the gate of Fernleigh, to recognize Sir John's travelling-carriage coming along at a great pace, evidently going to Mintern. They waited for him, and, fortunately finding him alone, they bore him off in triumph to give his opinion on the distribution of the chintzes on the walls of their cottage.

The moment they entered, Edith's intuitive fears began to be realized. The walls were all hung in cheap and gaudy papers in such palpable bad taste and such flagrant defiance of even the most uncultivated preference that all three were struck dumb by the horrors of it. No one spoke. They only hurried from room to room, hoping to find

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some with bare walls, but Lady Mayhew evidently had made good use of her time, for every room except those of the servants and the offices was papered.

The papers were not merely ugly, with an ugliness that can be lived down. They were hideous, with the hideousness of Tottenham Court Road—gaudy, aggressive, flaunting, not to be borne even by a blind man. Purple dragons, impossible human figures, flowers whose colors set the teeth on edge faced one at every turn. Even the stolid British workmen grinned as they recognized the new occupants. One of them touched his forelock to Sir John, who remained stricken before one of the most glaring.

"The lady," he said, jerking his thumb in the direction of Edith, "has a lively taste, Sir John."

Sir John eyed the man from under his bushy eyebrows.

"Saunders, are you foreman here?"

"Yes, Sir John."

"Well, how long will it take to wash all these papers off?"

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"To wash them off? They were ordered most particular, Sir John. I hope there is no mistake, Sir John?"

"There has been no mistake, Saunders," said Sir John, grimly. "It's worse than that. But Mrs. Cavendish's taste is different to Lady Mayhew's. We have downstairs the chintzes we selected in Paris for Fernleigh. This bill will be sent to Lady Mayhew. Make it out to-morrow, including the washing of the walls once—only once, mind you—and make it out to Lady Mayhew at Mintern. Now, then, when will these walls be ready for the chintzes?"

Saunders removed his cap and scratched his head. It seems to be an impossibility for the British workman to think without scratching his head.

"In about a week, Sir John—perhaps a day earlier, perhaps later, depending on how long the walls take to dry, Sir John."

"Begin instantly, then. Let me see you begin now. Here, give me that scraper. I want to give the first scrape mehself. There you are. Now, at it, meh man. A guinea a

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day to divide between you for every day you save from the week you calculate on. Ah, that goes better. Call your men and set them to work. Saunders, you're the man for meh money."

Highly delighted with his success, Sir John hurried away to look for Archie and Edith. He discovered them in the only room in which there were no workmen, and Edith in tears. It was the first time Sir John had ever seen her cry, and the sight unnerved him.

"She's a bit knocked up, anyway, from her illness," said Archie, apologetically.

"Let her cry," said Sir John, stoutly. "But there, Edith, don't, there's a good girl, or you'll have me crying, too. It's enough to make a prime-minister cry. Of all the infernal—but I've stopped it. Saunders—you remember Saunders, Archie? When he was laid up last year with a broken leg and his wife with twins? Well, Saunders is foreman here, and by the way I left him working I shouldn't wonder if he'd scraped half those Chinese dragons off by this time."

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"Oh, but, Sir John, how could she take it upon herself to deprive us of the pleasure? Even if we hadn't written that we had selected our own hangings, I should think she would have known!" cried Edith.

"She did know," said Sir John, "because I wrote her."

"So did I," said Archie.

Edith walked to the window to hide her tears. Sir John followed her, anxiously.

"What is the use of even trying to please her?" she said, in a despairing tone.

Archie stood tugging at his mustache.

"I suppose there is no sort of use of our trying to stand—this," he said, with a wave of his arm.

Edith turned on him with a subdued shriek.

"There, old man," said Sir John, "are you answered? If you're not, I'll give a few screeches mehsself. Stand it? Not while I am above ground, with a penny in meh pocket."

"If I thought mother did it to worry Edith—" began Archie; "but, now I think

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of it, her morning-gown is just those colors, purple and yellow, so perhaps this is really her fancy."

"Oh, Archie," cried Edith, almost hysterically, "leave it the way it was! I could stand it better to think it was malice than to suspect any woman of such taste."

"I only thought," murmured Cavendish, "that perhaps we were doing her an injus—"

"Pooh, Archie, don't be so damned filial," cried Sir John. "You know she did it to torment your wife. Don't you, Edith? Well, you needn't answer if you don't want to. But it's got to be stopped. We can't have Edith thinking all Englishwomen are as—ha! hum! well, I won't finish that, both on Archie's account and because I've a fancy that a glass house is over the head of some one else I could mention, but won't. But it must be stopped."

"But how?" said Cavendish.

"I've done a trifle towards it this morning," said Sir John, slyly. "I've ordered the bill for all this grace and beauty, and for washing off the walls once, to be sent to her

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ladyship, and, if she makes a fuss, I'll tell her it was presented by *my* orders. Touch her pocket if you want to murder her, Edith."

"By Jove!" cried Archie, "that's a good idea! I would never have thought of it. But, of course, we are not liable. And you are quite right, Sir John. That will touch her."

"She won't pay it," said Edith.

"See if she doesn't," retorted Sir John.

"If Sir John backs us, Edith," said her husband, "I think we may safely leave the issue in his hands."

"But, pardon me. Has even dear Sir John sufficient influence to persuade Lady Mayhew to do anything she doesn't want to?"

"Edith," said Sir John, "you are an American woman; there's no doubt of it after that speech. And you haven't yet grasped the fundamental principle of English rule. If you want to control an Englishwoman, you must bully her. Never ask, never coax. Bully her! And she'll respect you for it."

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"It's the same way with the English nation, isn't it?" asked Edith, slyly.

"I dare say it is," laughed Sir John. "We never back down until we are obliged to."

"Sir John bullies mother, there's no gain-saying it," said Archie, grimly. "Yet she adores him."

"I wish I could hear him—just once," said Edith, setting her lips together as she looked at the yellow men-of-war riding on tempestuous purple waves in the wall-paper.

CHAPTER IV

EDITH never heard the details of the interview which took place between Sir John and the dowager when the wall-paper bill came, but she knew when it occurred, for, if looks could kill, Edith would have fallen dead at her mother-in-law's feet many a time.

As it was, the dowager must have paid the bill, for Sir John was greatly given to a sudden fit of chuckling whenever he came to Mintern, and to striking his stick on the floor and leaning his head forward on the gold knob of it, as though he were enjoying something particularly rich and rare.

Then one blooming day, late in June, the Cavendishes moved to Fernleigh and walked with happy hearts among their Paris chintzes, and revelled in the glory of being in their own home, with no one to cavil or criticise

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unfavorably, or say nasty things or give nastier looks—no one, in short, to poison their complete and perfect bliss.

It was with difficulty that Sir John kept from moving in with them. He stayed to tea, and was only prevented from remaining to dine by saying to himself: "It will not do. No, certainly not. It would not be the thing at all. I must go home alone. Besides, Lady Chartersea will expect me, and I must not disappoint her. It will not do, I say." And by repeating these words at frequent intervals, he finally got himself into his carriage and started homeward, although it was an almost irresistible temptation not to pretend he had left something and turn back for it.

As for Edith, the days were one long glory, for she had a secret in her heart, dear to any woman, too precious as yet to be told to any human soul, even her own husband, and particularly dear to her in her new environments, where she needed every possible encouragement to enable her to endure her new position.

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One afternoon, she was just establishing herself for a quiet hour with a box of new books when a babel of voices made her start. Before she could rise the door was flung open and the four eldest of Archie's seven sisters precipitated themselves into the room. They were flushed as if from running, their boots were muddy, and wisps of their colorless hair hung over their damp foreheads.

"Edith," said the eldest, Alicia, "we've run away!"

"Just for the afternoon, you know."

"Inchworthy thinks we are practising."

"We knew Archie wouldn't be back until dinner."

"And we were just dying to talk to you, and—"

"And tell you what a brick you are!"

Edith looked from one to the other in amazement. It was the first sign of real affection she had received from any of her husband's family. As she gazed, she forgot their plainness, their ugly clothes, their awkward feet, their large, tombstone teeth,

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their general unattractiveness, and saw only a genuine kindness shining out of their immature faces.

"Girls, do you mean it?" she said, timidly.

"Mean that we like you? Why, we've adored you from the moment we saw you," cried Alicia.

"And we think mother has been simply rotten to you!"

"And you've stood it like an angel!"

"Though you have been jolly angry sometimes."

Edith sat down suddenly.

"Why, what's the matter? Are you ill? You look so pale."

"It surprises me so," murmured Edith.

"Lie down and smell this," urged Muriel.

Alicia smoothed her hair.

"Oh, what lovely hair!" she sighed.

"And those little feet—like a baby's," cried Agatha.

"Edith, when you feel better, will you kiss us? Oh, don't cry, Edith. We never meant to upset you. Do tell us what's the matter."

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"I—I've been so lonely," murmured Edith. "You don't know how lonely you can be in a foreign country, with only one friend and everybody else hating you."

"Do you call England a foreign country?" asked Muriel.

"I call any country foreign which makes me feel so much a stranger," cried Edith, with temper. "People make a country, not a strange language, and here, if I'd been a lizard or an alligator which Archie wanted to live in the house with him, I couldn't have been poked with sticks or pushed from one side of my cage to the other with umbrellas more than I have been by civilized human beings, or examined with more cold-blooded and impudent curiosity as to my native habits!"

The girls looked from one to the other in surprise at this outburst from one who so habitually held her tongue under even extreme provocation.

"I know one thing that she means," cried Alicia. "It makes her simply furious for mother to translate a French or German

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phrase to her, as if Edith didn't speak the languages. I saw Edith tear her Valenciennes lace handkerchief in half last week when the Bishop of Ardsley said '*Prima-facie* evidence,' and mother said, 'That means "on the face of it," Edith,' and directly afterwards the Duchess of Strowther said '*Comme ça*,' and mother said, 'That means "like that," Edith.' If I'd been in Edith's place, I would have said: 'I understand Latin, Lady Mayhew, and I speak French much better than you do. You can ask mademoiselle if I don't.'"

Edith listened to this amazing defence of herself with incredulous ears. Could it be possible that champions of her defenceless position were to rise out of the Mayhew family itself?

"If anybody wants to know what I think," cried Agatha, the youngest, sitting astride a chair and leaning her arms on the back of it, "*I* think that it's enough to make the most even-tempered crazy angry to be treated always as if one had no breeding and came of no family, as mother treats Edith.

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Now, of course, I don't know anything about it, and Tessie says that servants and cab-drivers and rich people are all equal in America, but I dare say that Edith could tell us differently. Couldn't you, Edith? Haven't you any old families in the States?"

"What difference would old families make," said Edith, "if the members of it showed no breeding?"

"Well, what do you mean by breeding?" asked Alicia.

"Tell me first what you mean by it."

"Well," said Alicia, slowly, looking for her sisters to help her out, "I think we mean that when a girl is born of an old family, on one of the ancestral estates, and is educated by a governess in languages, and can draw and sing and do needle-work, and can ride and play at tennis—isn't that what we mean, girls?—that she is well-bred. I think that is what we would call well-bred."

The other girls nodded.

"Yes, that's what we mean."

"I suppose," said Edith, leaning her little pink chin in her hand, "that that is a

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good definition, and really shows thought, Alicia."

Alicia flushed until her pale eyes filled with water. She was not accustomed to praise.

"Now, what do *you* call breeding?" cried Agatha, with a bounce on her chair.

"I never have defined it," said Edith, slowly; "but since you ask me, I should call a woman of the best breeding one who was born with *savoir faire* and one who avoided giving pain to any one. If you combine those two qualities, you will have a lady, no matter if her family is so new that you can see the varnish on it."

Agatha screamed with delight and rocked the legs of her chair back and forth.

"Agatha, what would Inchworthy say if she could see the way you are sitting and hear you shriek?" cried Muriel.

"But Edith is so funny," squealed Agatha. "She is just as droll for us as she is for Sir John, and she doesn't have to stop and think it up beforehand; it pops out on the instant—just like that about varnish on a new family!"

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"Edith, tell Agatha to sit properly," implored Alicia.

"I don't care how she sits—she may stand on her head if she will only love me," exclaimed Edith, at which Agatha flung herself on her knees beside Edith's chair, and the conquest of the entire four was complete.

The young bride could not keep the wonder out of her eyes at the difference in the present behavior of her youthful kinswomen and that first anguished half-hour they spent in her company the afternoon of her arrival. Was that natural or was this? To-day they were like awkward young colts turned out to play. They hardly knew what to do with their liberty, except to frisk and kick up their heels in their delight at being out from under the eternal surveillance of Inchworthy and the dowager.

Finally, however, another half-hour's intimate conversation enabled Edith to put a few questions, without undue curiosity.

"Alicia," she said, "how you have all changed since I first knew you!"

"You mean," broke in Agatha, "how like

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simpletons we acted the day you arrived. I knew you would think we were fools—I told Muriel so. I said, 'She takes us for seven fools'; and, indeed, we acted like it. But you don't know how we had been warned against you. Mother said that if we had to meet you we were to try to forget everything you said, and on no account to copy your accent nor your voice, and not to believe a word you said, because Americans always quizzed and chaffed their betters, and were so free in their speech and manners that it almost amounted to immorality. Yes, she did. She said that to Inchworthy, for I overheard her. So, of course, we were crazy to see you, and yet almost afraid you would bite us. But when we saw how sweet and simple you were, and how Archie adored you, and when we saw for ourselves that you weren't loud nor noisy, and that you knew how to sit and walk, why we were so upset we hadn't a word to say for ourselves."

"And, oh, wasn't she sweet to give us extra lumps of sugar in our tea!" cried Mar na, the third of the four.

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Edith made no reply to this explanation. It began to dawn upon her that the dowager did not so much hate her personally as that she was undertaking, quite honestly, the civilization of a savage American.

"Edith," said Muriel, timidly, after a pause, "won't you show us how your maid does your hair? It is quite the loveliest thing I ever saw."

"I won't let Cephyse touch it," laughed Edith. "I do it myself. No maid can ever do hair like mine."

The American girl paused, and saw in the wistful faces of her English sisters the longing to copy themselves upon her, to emulate her clothes and daintiness, and to escape from their own ugliness, which never had impressed itself upon their consciousness until she came among them.

"Girls," she said, "when I was your age I used to think the greatest fun in the world was to dress up in my mother's clothes. Suppose you all dress up in mine."

If she had by a wave of the hand presented four old maids with young, hand-

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some, and rich husbands, Edith could not have created a more ecstatic expression on countenances than on those of the four young English girls. A wave of responsive joy swept over her own soul. How simple it was, after all! And how the eternal feminine had supplied the electric bond which makes the whole world kin! The mere thought of being turned loose to riot at will among Edith's Paris trousseau was more than if she had secured their soul's eternal bliss by letters patent to salvation.

They rushed up-stairs, two maids were called in, and the metamorphosis began.

They had the beginnings of the English-woman's beautiful figure—the small waist, flat back, sloping hips, and broad shoulders. Their blond skin, however, was too thin, and flushed too easily. It lacked the satiny finish and marble whiteness of Edith's, but still they had the making of well-built, fresh-colored English girls. Under Edith's direction their fair hair was waved and dressed high. The maids laced them into Edith's most marvellous clothes, and in the midst

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of their wildest excitement, caused by their own undeniable good looks, the door opened without the courtesy of a knock, and the dowager countess stood regarding them through her "starers."

Such was the terror they felt for their mother that the four stood as if turned into stone.

Edith resented the intrusion.

"I beg your pardon, Lady Mayhew, but I did not hear you knock," she said.

"I did not knock. Perhaps that was why you did not hear me," said the dowager, coming in, propelling her chin forward at each step, as an angry turkey walks. To Edith's surprise she was followed by another woman, a stranger.

"Tessie," said Lady Mayhew, "here are the girls," pointing to the four graven images, who were bereft of the power of motion, "and there," pointing to Edith, "is the American."

If she had said "And there is the Scarlet Woman," the Dowager Countess of Mayhew could not have expressed more in her tone

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and her pointing finger. At first Edith was stung, and then—well, she laughed, a pretty, good-humored laugh of sheer amusement and appreciation. She was not conceited, but she had the true American girl's self-respect, and she could not fail to see that there could be no real condescension in the attitude of the Englishwomen standing before her, with such ill-hanging skirts, such feet, and such bonnets as compared to herself in her Paris tea-gown. She was beginning to realize, as all Americans must who meet in England the not uncommon type of the dowager countess, that the Englishwoman's provincialism was quite natural; not assumed for the occasion, in the least, but was an ignorance of all nations outside of the British, as deep-rooted and prejudiced as only British ignorance can be. Ignorance in a German, a Frenchman, or an Italian is deplorable enough, but when you add to ignorance a stubborn determination not to be convinced nor enlightened, and a rooted conviction that one's own ignorance is due to the insignificance of the subject ignored,

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then you have the ignorance of the English man or woman of the type of Lady Mayhew. Fortunately, the war with Spain has done much towards eradicating, or rather modifying, this particular sort in regard to Americans.

Tessie did not even greet her new kinswoman. She was absorbed in watching her mother-in-law annihilate the four sisters.

"Take off those indecent clothes, and go instantly home to Inchworthy. I will see you when I return."

"Pray don't abuse my poor clothes, Lady Mayhew," said Edith. "Such a tone of condemnation is enough to make the very labels of Paquin and Félix turn red with shame."

"I speak the truth when I call them indecent," said Lady Mayhew. "They are too smart for any one except a Paris *cocotte*."

Edith laughed again.

"That is almost what they say in Paris," she said. "I have even been warned by French friends against wearing a shirt-

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waist on the street, because none except American girls and *cocottes* wear them."

"What is a shirt-waist?" asked the dowager, regarding Edith through her lorgnon.

"It is what you call a cotton blouse," said Edith.

"Our young people wear them just as the Americans do," said Tessie, speaking for the first time.

"Not *just* as we do," thought Edith to herself, thinking of the backs of some English girls she knew.

"Good-bye, Edith, dearest," called the girls from the doorway. "We've never had such a good time in our whole lives, and we'll come again the very first chance we get."

Lady Mayhew's face stiffened as she heard this impertinence. Tessie laughed.

"You seem to have captivated them, Edith," she said.

"How do you do?" said Edith, pointedly, going up to Tessie and holding out her hand.

Tessie reddened, but accepted the rebuke

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—indeed, rather liked Edith the better for it. It showed spirit.

“I beg your pardon,” she said.

“If you will come into the library, I will ring for tea. I do not receive in my dressing-room.”

“Good,” said Tessie. “You are quite right, Edith. We had no business to intrude on your privacy.”

Edith looked around at Tessie, smiling doubtfully. Ordinarily she would have been disarmed at once by such frankness, and imagined that she and Tessie would be friends, but experience had taught her to await developments and give her new relatives the opportunity to dislike her and to express their adverse opinions of her before endeavoring to overcome them. It was a trying position for an American girl who had been accustomed to charm everybody from her childhood by her beauty and pretty, taking ways, but it did her good. Edith's trust in people had been hitherto too universal. It is equally bad for a toddling baby to make a practice of patting strange dogs

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on the head. After a few have snapped at her, she may learn discrimination and to know that a wag of the tail does not always imply that liberties may be taken.

Edith was prepared to be inventoried. She bore unflinchingly Tessie's scrutiny of her clothes, her house, her tea-service, and all her belongings. Tessie asked how many servants she kept, how many carriages, what her monthly expenses were, and if her uncle in America allowed her an income. Edith colored under some of these questions, but answered them. Tessie seemed surprised that her uncle had confined his generosity to providing her with her trousseau.

"Does Archie allow you to—" began Tessie.

Edith simply raised her eyes from her teacup, and the dowager broke in:

"Archie allows Edith her own way in everything, Tessie, in the most pusillanimous way, and Sir John backs him up in it. Between them she is abominably spoiled."

"I don't have my own way in everything, Lady Mayhew," said Edith, gently, "or I

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would rid myself of numberless annoyances which I now endeavor to bear quietly for my husband's sake."

Tessie screwed her face into a malicious smile of understanding.

"I shall ask Mayhew to continue Archie's allowance," she said, putting down her cup, "and—"

"Indeed, Tessie, I hope you will not," broke in the dowager. "Edith and Archie have plenty. Yankees are such good managers, they could very well afford to live more simply, and then you could bring Alicia out at the next Drawing-room. I beg you to think well before you promise."

The dowager shot a malignant glance at Edith. Was this vile American independence of hers to permeate the very atmosphere of the Cavendish family and encourage revolt, not only in the girls, but in meek little Tessie also?

"I have thought," said Tessie, shaking the crumbs from her skirt. "I only wish Mayhew would take a few lessons from Archie, and allow me a little more free-

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dom. American women are very lucky, Edith."

"I think we are—in some things," said Edith.

"As I said before, tell Archie he can count on his allowance, and Mayhew begs that you and Archie will stay with us at Cawdor for the shooting. The Charterseas are coming."

"Oh, is Sir John going?" cried Edith, with kindling eagerness.

"If he is able," said Tessie, smiling. "Is he as much your champion as he was in his letters?"

"Sir John makes a perfect fool of himself over her," said the dowager, stabbing Edith with one eye and rolling the other as if in search of fresh ammunition.

"Come, we must be going," said Tessie. "We have a long walk before us."

"Walk!" cried Edith. "You surely did not come on foot? And you not strong. Indeed, you should not have done so. Sit down and let me ring for the brougham. I cannot let you walk back. Why, your little

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babies are not two months old yet. Tell me about them."

Tessie sank back into her chair with a curious look in her plain, little face. Never in her life had she been so considered before.

"You have never thought necessary to order out the brougham for me, Edith," observed the dowager, with displeasure.

"I would have been glad to, if I had known you wanted it," said Edith. "But as you seldom drive over, it never occurred to me to offer you my horses to drive back."

"Your horses, Edith? It would sound better to his mother if you said Archie's horses," said the dowager, in dignified reproof. "You always say, 'my table-linen,' 'my silver.' You mean Archie's."

"But they are mine," smiled Edith. "It would sound as absurd to me to say Archie's linen as to say of this dress 'Archie's tea-gown.' Those things always belong to the wife—in America."

"Doesn't Archie mind?" asked Tessie, round-eyed.

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"Doesn't Archie mind what?" said Caven-dish himself from the doorway.

"Mind having Edith call all the furniture, the linen, the silver, the horses, the servants even—hers?" cried the dowager.

"Not a bit of it. Tessie, my dear sister, I am glad to see you looking so well. How are the little ones? Good! Mater? No need to ask how you are. And as to Edith, if that little woman wants to call everything I have hers, she shall do it. In America everything belongs to the woman, Tessie."

Tessie laughed, then groaned. As for the dowager, she—well, she snorted—a polite, drawing-room snort, however, and one countenanced by the best society.

"I wish Mayhew could hear," said Tessie.

"Mayhew would only pity me," laughed Archie, "until he saw Edith, and then he would understand it. But if you think I am foolish, Tessie, you should see Sir John. He is simply fatuous."

Tessie laughed.

"So we have heard. He wrote a long

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letter to Mayhew from Venice which was full of her. Mayhew was delighted with it."

"How is your husband?" asked Edith, smiling and coloring. "We heard he was not well."

"Mayhew has been awfully knocked up. He flew into a rage with the coachman because he was late one day last week and walked three miles in the scorching sun at a tremendous pace and—nearly had a stroke," said Tessie, lowering her voice and looking at the dowager.

Archie looked seriously disturbed.

"He should be so careful," he said.

"Yes, but he won't. He won't even believe the doctors when they tell him that he is liable to go as his father did."

"The brougham, madam," said the butler. The Cavendishes had no footman.

"Your man should have announced the brougham to *me*, Archie," said the dowager. Both ladies rose immediately.

"As the brougham is Edith's, he announced it to her, my dear mater," said Archie, with a twinkle in his blue eyes, and,

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without allowing any one more time, he safely piloted his mother and Tessie to the carriage, shut them in, and then came back to his wife.

Edith was waiting for him, with shining eyes.

"Oh, Archie, *dear!*" she cried, running towards him and flinging herself into his arms.

"There, dear heart. Dear flower face," he said, pressing his lips to her soft hair.

"Oh, to think that you came right out and championed me before them both as you never did before. Oh! oh!"

"You may thank Sir John for part of it, pretty one," said her husband, generously. "I have just come from him and he gave me such a talking to—such a regular wiggling as I haven't had since I was at Eton. He went for my mother shockingly, and said you were in the enemy's country. I can't have that white-haired old man loving you more chivalrously than your own husband, my own."

"Oh, dear Sir John," laughed Edith, looking up into her husband's face with such

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happy, shining eyes that her tall and usually self-contained husband closed them with his hand, and folded her jealously with his arms, murmuring more fond and pretty terms of rapturous endearment than he ever had been moved to express before.

“Must I be taught to appreciate and love such a woman?” he thought, in strong self-reproach, as he realized Edith’s gratitude for his sudden rally to her support.

Verily, dear Sir John!

CHAPTER V

ALTHOUGH Sir John fully intended to make the journey to Scotland in the company of the Cavendishes, his plans were, at the last moment, neatly frustrated by his wife and the dowager. The best and most determined of men are frequently outwitted by quite stupid women, and in this instance the dowager was attacked by so violent and sudden an illness, while on the very road to the station to take the train, that Lady Chartersea insisted upon turning back with her, and upon sending word to Archie and Edith, who had gone on ahead, not to wait for them.

Sir John so strongly suspected the two amiable ladies who had him in charge that he endeavored to upset their little plot by sending word for Archie to wait for them, and they would all go on together in the

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morning. But, at this suggestion, the dowager recovered sufficiently to say that rather than subject the whole party to such inconvenience she would martyr herself and proceed immediately, even if she died of pain on the way.

Sir John was a gentleman. The carriage turned back. Edith and Archie went that day as planned, and the dowager fortunately recovered sufficiently to continue the journey at the same hour on the day following.

But Sir John was an invalid to the extent that he was unable to control his emotions as completely as he would have liked. He brooded childishly over the disappointment of not travelling through the lovely scenery in the sprightly company of his little American girl, and he shot revengeful glances from under his shaggy white eyebrows at the red-faced dowager in the far corner of his reserved carriage. Nor would he accept any attentions from his wife. If the truth must be told, Sir John sulked the whole way, and left the two ladies to carry on their low-toned conversation without any assistance

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from him. When he wanted anything, he had the guard summon his man. When they wanted anything, they took care not to want it too strenuously between stations, but to wait until their maids came to ask if they were needed. So it was not the most amiable of travelling parties, but, to the great satisfaction of two of them, the American, with her stylish travelling-clothes and bright face and pretty ways, was not there to stir up strife.

Lady Chartersea, always tactless, occasionally offered a remark or suggested a change in her husband's position, only to be met with a gruff refusal, which she took only as a matter of course.

"Sir John seems rather upset," murmured Lady Mayhew.

"He always was a little short in his temper. He has a strain of Irish blood in him. I think that is what makes him so different to most other Englishmen," said his wife.

"The doctor says it is bad for him to be excited, doesn't he?" asked the dowager.

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"Oh yes. He insists upon quiet. That is why I have such an objection to his seeing so much of Edith. She is so stimulating. He declares she is the cleverest creature he ever met."

"I don't call her clever in the least. I call her pert," remarked the dowager, with a decision which in any one short of a countess would have seemed spiteful.

"I confess that I don't understand her," returned Lady Chartersea. "In Cairo she used to be quite talkative before me, and I could see why Sir John should be amused at her chaff. But here in England she covers everything up with that demure little way of hers; but, from a look in her eyes, I think she mocks at us—at England, I mean—at our life here."

"I understand you," said the dowager, sitting up suddenly. "I never mentioned it before, and I wouldn't to any one but you, but at times she actually makes me uncomfortable. Her lightness of character makes it appear that we take ourselves too seriously."

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"Very well put," said Lady Chartersea.
"That phrase reminds me of Sir John."

The dowager reared her crest and rolled her unemployed eye around in its socket several times before her pleasure in her friend's praise could be properly assimilated.

"To me, with a serious purpose in life, with seven daughters to educate and find husbands for, such lightness seems quite reprehensible," declared the dowager.

"Quite so," murmured her friend.

"I endeavor to keep the dear girls from under her blighting influence as much as possible, but I am afraid that their youth makes them peculiarly susceptible. Agatha and Muriel in particular have been extremely impertinent to me several times in connection with her."

"Shocking!"

"It's no good punishing them—they are too old for that, Inchworthy says, and I think the good soul is right. I forbade them any sugar in their tea for a fortnight for masquerading in her clothes that day, but Inchworthy reported that they didn't mind

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in the least. This caused me some suspicion, so I investigated while they were out, and found boxes of American sweets, the most extravagant kind of fancy candied fruits and marvellous bonbons, hidden away, evidently furnished by that little viper."

Lady Chartersea gripped the handle of her black bag tightly.

"What did you do?"

"I took them all away, of course. They were most delicious, but ruinous to the complexion. They will last me for a year."

"I still have part of a box that Edith gave me in Cairo," said Lady Chartersea. "I open it perhaps once a month, but the Americans—did you ever see an American eat sweets?"

"Never," shuddered the dowager.

"I hope you never may, then. I assure you that I have seen Edith Joyce buy a two-pound box of American sweets at Fuller's in Paris, and eat it in a day and a half! You won't believe me. I wouldn't have believed it myself if I hadn't been an eye-witness."

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The two ladies looked at each other in silence, then they shook their heads.

"Everything she does—everything she says—even her clothes—are demoralizing," groaned the dowager. "She has bewitched the girls. They copy her in every possible manner, and although I always send them away when she comes, they are in constant communication with her. She will ruin my girls—ruin them, Lady Chartersea. For I would rather see them dead than like her."

"Then there is but one thing to do, dear Lady Mayhew," said her friend, laying her hand earnestly on the dowager's knee, "and that is, you must influence her. She must not be allowed to come into our families and uproot and upset at will. I, too, have felt her blighting influence. I, too. You must civilize her, Lady Mayhew. You must teach her to keep her place, just as you would train a raw maid. At present she is nothing but *une belle sauvage*. But she has that American quickness, and she will learn, for she respects our English institutions and admires our people. Oh yes, Lady

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Mayhew. She admires us. Indeed, she does."

"I wonder if she does?" mused the dowager.

"You must not allow yourself to wonder. You must undertake her as a sacred duty. She is a daughter to you as well as the girls. You must polish her—finish her, as it were. But no weakness. You must be firm with her. Remember, she has no mother."

"You are right," said the dowager, settling her bonnet with an air of decision. "You are right. I must undertake her as a duty."

The train stopped at a small station and the Cawdor servants appeared.

"Here we are," said Sir John. "Look about, Parsons, and see if Mr. and Mrs. Cavendish have come to meet us. Ah, there they are! And Tessie, too. Bless her heart. How are you, Edith? Archie, you'll let me drive up with your wife, won't you? That's a good fellow. Thanks, Tessie. I'm fit as a fiddle. Archie, look after me wife, will you?"

CHAPTER VI

"WELL, Edith," said Sir John, his red face beaming down upon her, "how goes it?"

"All very strange and foreign, but interesting," said Edith. "You know we only arrived yesterday."

"Yes, yes," said Sir John, shortly. "I know. Did you and Archie get the carriage I had reserved? I told Minton particularly to remind you."

"Oh yes, we got it, and thank you so much. But we were tremendously disappointed that you missed the train."

"Missed the train!" snorted Sir John. "I never missed a train in meh life. It was a trick of meh wife's. She and Lady Mayhew put it up together. I know 'em. Meh wife says your society is too stimulating. Just because you make the old man laugh and

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forget for a few moments that he is doomed to die at any time. Too stimulating, indeed! I want to be stimulated immediately. Tell me how they are treating you. Is Tessie nasty to you? Tessie can be very nasty when she chooses."

"No, to my surprise, Tessie seems to like me, and Mayhew is very kind."

"You aren't telling me the truth, Edith."

Edith laughed.

"Yes, I am. Tessie and Mayhew are doing their best."

"How about the others?"

"Sir John, you mustn't forget that I am Tessie's guest. I can't abuse her friends, can I?"

"Then you'd like to, if you hadn't eaten her salt?"

"No, not exactly. But I'd like to talk things over. You know you are the only human being in England who understands me, and I believe that is because you are part Irish. Even Archie, who loves me dearly, doesn't see things the way you do."

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"But Archie is getting a point of view, don't you think?"

"Oh yes. Archie is adapting himself wonderfully. But if he did understand the way you do, I couldn't discuss things with him as I do with you, for these are his people. Don't you see? And while my comments and criticisms would be made only in the spirit of the observing traveller, let us say, Archie's strongest characteristic, and the one I most admire, is loyalty to his own, so that he is plainly disqualified. Besides that, Archie does not enjoy discussion. Conversation, just for the sake of exchanging ideas, has no charm for him, whereas it has for you and me."

"Few Englishmen do care for conversation *per se*. An Englishman likes to give you his views, but he doesn't care a hang for yours."

"Yes, and isn't it strange? Now, when I have a set of impressions on a new subject, I am crazy to know what Archie thinks of it, and then what you think. I even like to hear what Lady Mayhew thinks, it is so certain to be wrong."

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Sir John shouted.

"*Isn't* it? Did you ever know a woman who could be so persistently and consistently antagonistic to every view and idea you have in your brain as the dowager? And her placid air of assurance that her fiat is final, and the only legitimate answer to a problem, is so infernally exasperating that, 'pon meh word, Edith, some day I know I shall hit her in the eye with meh walking-stick. I know I shall. It 'll be too much for me some day."

Sir John chuckled alarmingly at the mental picture he had drawn, and whipped up the cob. Edith watched him with some uneasiness, for he had refused to have a groom, and she never knew what sort of exertion or form of excitement was bad for him.

"Don't let's hurry. Let's make the drive as long as we can," she said.

Sir John shot her a keen glance from his blue eyes.

"Edith, if you were meh daughter or granddaughter, you would lead me around by the nose, and I never would care a ha'-penny."

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"What makes you think so?"

"Because you are such a sly little thing, and your tact is never at fault. Now, if meh wife or the dowager had wanted me not to exert mehself, they would have cried out, 'Oh, Sir John! Don't let him pull so, Sir John! Pray, don't tire yourself, meh dear! Remember the doctor's orders, Sir John,' and made me feel so like a damned baby, with meh feet pinned up in swaddling-clothes, that I'd have got in a towering rage and given the horse his head out of pure contrariness."

"And which would probably have brought on a bad attack," said Edith.

"Certainly, and which would all have been—"

"Their fault," supplemented Edith, demurely.

"Without a doubt," chuckled Sir John.

Plainly he enjoyed the whimsical nature of the American girl.

"Who is here? Are we a large party?" he asked, presently.

"The Bishop of Ardsley, and the Duchess

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of Strowther and her daughter, Lady Mary Goddard, and the most delightful old Frenchwoman, Madame des Planches—”

“I know her. A fascinating creature. So daintily malicious that you can barely detect it, and tremendously discriminating.”

“But, Sir John, tell me why well-bred people discuss such extraordinarily indelicate questions in public—at the dinner-table, for example? I am not a prude, but I assure you that not even in Paris have I heard such—well, to be frank, such indecent conversation as I have heard in England, particularly in London.”

“Why, I don’t know,” said Sir John, slowly. “Are we indecent?”

“I don’t know what your standards are. I can only say that in America we hold some things too sacred and others too immoral to discuss publicly.”

“I’ll listen to-night,” said Sir John, astutely. “Tessie always manages to get a mixture in her house-parties, and the London set are well represented in the duchess and Lady Mary.”

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"I wasn't referring to anything I have heard here," said Edith, coloring.

"Weren't you? Well, perhaps it will apply before we have done with them. What do you think of Lady Mary? She is considered one of the most beautiful young women in England."

"Is she? Yes, she is beautiful—but—well, I'll look at her again to-night."

"You'll give her another chance, you mean."

"Well, there were no men here last night except Mayhew and Archie and the bishop. Three arrived to-day, however, so perhaps she will do us the honor to put on a gown which is at least fresh."

"Is Tessie going to give us a ball, do you know?" asked Sir John.

"I don't know. I have heard nothing of it. Why do you ask?"

"Because I want you to have a chance to look your best," answered the old man, frankly. "But if she isn't, then you must do your best at every dinner. Have you brought plenty of frocks?"

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Edith laughed and looked up gratefully at Sir John.

"Yes, I have. I even went to the extravagance of ordering some new ones."

"Good!" said Sir John. "Good! You must put on a new one every day. I want you to make 'em sit up. I want you to—what was that thing you said that I liked so much? Hit 'em—no—"

"Knock 'em silly," said Edith, dimpling.

"That's it. I want you to knock 'em silly. Don't let Lady Mary ignore you. Don't permit the duchess to snub you. If Sir Wemyss Lombard is here, monopolize him. He is said to be in love with Lady Mary and she with him, but her mother won't hear to it, because he is poor. He is heir to the Chidworth estate, however, and if he gets that everything will be smooth sailing. If he has come back from America, he'll be here."

"He is here. He came to-day. But, Sir John, even to please you, I'm not going to flirt with Lady Mary's lover, nor any other man, for that matter."

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"Why not, pray? You flirted enough in Cairo, to my certain knowledge."

"Yes, but I wasn't married then. Archie wouldn't like it now."

Sir John looked at her and pulled at his white mustache.

"Well, then, don't exactly flirt, but be nice to him. Encourage him to talk to you. Be friends with him. Let him see that you like him."

"In other words, flirt with him under the guise of friendship, and cheat myself into thinking I am doing no harm," cried Edith. "Look here, Sir John. What has got into you? Why do you advise me to do such a thing? Aren't you a friend of my husband's?"

Sir John did not answer at once. He looked straight between the horse's ears and frowned a little. Then he said, abruptly:

"Edith, you were quite right when you said that things seemed foreign to you here. It sounded odd at first, for we English are accustomed to thinking Americans as related to us—our children, so to speak. But,

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after all, we are two nations, and you are as foreign to us as we seem to you. Now, perhaps I shall explain it badly, but there is such a thing as being over-refined in smart English society, of being too ladylike, of being so unobtrusive that you will be overlooked. The English like to have their sleep disturbed, but they never will wake up of their own accord. They won't inquire too closely into a personality. They won't read a page too finely printed. They are indolently somnolent. In order to win their attention and respect, you must frighten or bully them. Shock them out of their lethargy. Do you understand me? Lady Mary is a spoiled beauty. Ten to one she won't look at you unless you attract one of her satellites. Make yourself dangerous to her supremacy and then she will respect you. You are a married woman. Assert yourself. When Lady Mayhew insults you, be impertinent to her. Differ with the duchess, and don't let her browbeat you. Tessie has made the same mistake, but she did it because she was a coward; you are doing it be-

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cause you are a lady. It doesn't pay to be too much of a lady in England, meh dear. You'll only get snubbed for your pains. Remember what an old man tells you—an old man who has made good use of his ears and eyes, and who has been everywhere and seen everything. Buck up now. Flirt harmlessly with the men and be nasty to the women, and see how it works."

Edith's eyes sparkled dangerously. Sir John had touched the springs of Americanism in her, but she made no immediate reply.

"Who else is here?" asked Sir John, after a sidelong glance at her which seemed to satisfy him.

"Mrs. Terence O'Gorman—"

"Good Lord!" laughed Sir John. "Tessie is going it a bit."

"And Lady Munkittrick—"

Sir John turned and looked at her.

"I don't wonder that you said the conversation was indecent," he said. "I'll wager Nora O'Gorman didn't make one remark that you could repeat to me."

"Well, I don't know," said Edith. "Some

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of them were very subtle and everybody roared, but they seemed so indelicately public. Now, I adore scandal and gossip as much as any woman, but the place for it is not before men, nor to be shouted at the top of one's voice. There are the amenities to be considered."

"What did she say to Lady Munkittrick? Those two are as good as a Pinero play."

"Well, one thing was this. Lady Munkittrick had been to the nursery to see the babies, and after remarking how much they looked like Mayhew, she said, plaintively, 'Now, my children look like neither of us. Munkittrick and I are both light, and the children are both dark.' Whereat Mrs. O'Gorman said, 'But, Elsie, remember that some of your best men friends are dark.' And everybody simply screamed."

"And the beauty of it is," said Sir John, with a chuckle, "that Lady Munkittrick is about the only smart woman I know who has not taken a lover. She is simply daffy over Munkittrick. That is one reason Nora O'Gorman always attacks her. She

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hates a woman to be so different to all the others."

"Oh, Sir John," cried Edith, warmly, "you don't mean that Lady Munkittrick is the only one?"

"Of the smart ones, yes. Let me see if I am wrong. The Duchess of Strowther has a son by Sir William Vargrave, Tessie's father. Madame des Planches is a Parisienne, so I don't know her former record. She has been the friend of the Duke of Strowther and three others, to my certain knowledge. Nora O'Gorman has two children, one by Mayhew and one by Sir Wemyss Lombard, and none by poor old Terence. But he doesn't care, because he has one of the handsomest women in Great Britain, Mrs. Poindexter—or had her, the last I heard. But that was before I went to Cairo, so possibly he has switched off before this."

Edith looked up at him with eyes of horror.

"She isn't here," she said.

"Ah, then it is some one else with Terence, as I fancied. For if the affair were still

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on, she would be here, you may depend upon it. I must look into the matter and find out where she is and who is with her now. It would never do to allow mehsel to get behindhand in matters of this sort."

He looked down at Edith quizzically, but she failed to answer him with her usual smile.

"And does everybody know all this?" she said, at length.

"Certainly," cried Sir John, cheerfully. "But this is ancient history. The present affairs are all different, but, take meh word for it, there are plenty of lovers in this same party of ours or Tessie never would have got them. One won't accept an invitation without the other, you know."

Edith was silent, and Sir John added, apologetically:

"It has got pretty bad, I will admit that. But you might as well face the situation and learn not to be squeamish."

"Then, considering the real lives of these people, their conversation was not at all beneath them, for I have told you about the way the talk ran," said Edith.

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"And you object to it?" said Sir John.

"No, not in itself. I have an idea that it is none of my business to criticise unfavorably the ideals of the English or French or German morality or taste. It is their own affair. As long as you observe the Monroe Doctrine as applicable to yourselves, England for the English, I shall never complain. You may be as clever and witty and wicked as ever you like, and I shall only look on and enjoy it. But when you English attack me, and object to my standards and ideals, and criticise my taste simply because it happens to differ from yours, then I rise up and not only defend mine as infinitely purer and more refined and superior in every way to yours, but I will attack yours tooth and nail and fight you to a finish."

"Edith," said Sir John, slowly, "why in hell—no, I sha'n't beg your pardon for that, because I mean it—why in hell don't you talk that way when they attack you? That is the first time I have seen a trace of the old Cairo spirit. Why do you sit down twirling your thumbs like a little assy-go-

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assy—to say just plain ‘ass’ seems to give me no relief at all—and let them maul you as they please? Why don’t you go for them? Tell me that!”

“Well, things have changed,” said Edith, smiling at Sir John’s deliberate vehemence. “I am married into the family. To defend myself, I would become too bitter and stir up strife. Then, too, I am always either a guest of theirs or they are guests of mine, and my ideals of hospitality will not allow me to take advantage of the opportunity.”

“Nonsense!” cried Sir John. “Nonsense, I say!”

“Nevertheless, it is my code. I can’t descend to meet them on their own level.”

“Then, if you could meet on mutual ground, would you talk back, as you do to me when we are alone?”

“Try me,” flashed Edith. “Just try me and see.”

Sir John pulled at his mustache, then nodded his head.

“We shall see,” he said. “But, Edith, remember this. When the time comes,

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don't flinch. Say your worst and do your worst. You can't turn the British stomach. We are used to calling a spade a spade. Forget hospitality; forget that you are a little lady. Remember only that you are an American defending your country against British sneers."

Sir John was well satisfied with the look Edith gave him.

CHAPTER VII

ALTHOUGH the Mayhews were comparatively poor, the family was old, distinguished, and exclusive. Aside from that, everybody knew that there was plenty of money in trust for the first male heir, and so; in spite of invitations where the entertainment would be more sumptuous, Tessie had been able to gather a party culled from the smartest of society.

Take, for example, the Duchess of Strowther and the reigning beauty, Lady Mary Goddard. The duchess was one of the most influential women in Great Britain, yet she had chosen, out of half a hundred invitations, to come to Cawdor.

The duke would not be of the party until the next day, but Sir John told Edith that he was one of the handsomest peers in England, and from him Lady Mary got her

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beauty. Certainly she never got it from her mother, or, if she did, she got it all, for the face of the duchess was fascinating in its ugliness.

Her nose was flat and the nostrils ambiguously melted into her billowy cheeks without troubling to let you know the line of demarcation. Small red and purple veins ran scattering over her face like rivers on a well-drawn map. Her mouth was loose, her teeth projecting and fan-shaped, and Sir John was vile enough to warn Edith that the duchess was a human atomizer, and she'd better raise an umbrella when she talked to her. The duchess was fat—not large, but fat—and, to quote Sir John again, "that part of the duchess which you can see in evening-dress looks for all the world like two loaves of Graham bread set to rise." Nora O'Gorman, to whom he said this, said the wicked part of Sir John's speech lay in the word "Graham," but she admitted, under pressure, that the duchess was rather polka-dotted.

Mrs. O'Gorman herself was keen and

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clever-looking. That, of course, precludes her being beautiful, but her hair came in a fuzzy fringe to her eyebrows and ended in the universal Bath-bun in the back. She wore twelve silver and gold bangle bracelets on one of her thin arms, and her gowns were frequently trimmed in chenille fringe which looked like caterpillars.

Lady Mary had the limpid cow-eyes of so many beautiful Englishwomen, who look so adorably at you when you are getting off your most brilliant whimsicalities that you do not in the least care that an understanding has not got behind those eyelashes. For their eyelashes are so long and thick and sweep so bewitchingly over those peachy cheeks, can you blame even a witticism for becoming entangled therein?

Lady Mary was undeniably a more beautiful woman than Edith Cavendish, yet in a ballroom Edith would have attracted more attention. Lady Mary's hair was not becoming in a bun, and her fringe covered a broad, low, beautiful brow, as white as milk and as smooth as satin. In the same way,

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the delicate sweep of her fine eyebrows was lost under the edges of the invisible hair-net which invariably held her fringe in place. But her long, slender neck was as graceful as a swan's, her figure was perfect, and her face something to dream about and rave over. Her clothes were Paris-made and of great beauty, but she never knew how to wear them; whereas Edith's at once took on an individual stamp, because electrically involved in her own brilliant personality, and, from a sleeve to a glove, possessed an air of distinction. Edith walked well, stood well, sat well. There was something very attractive about the way she held her head. It was not pride, as it was in Lady Munkit-trick, nor *hauteur*, as it was in the duchess, but it held some of the expectant gladness of youth, of unconscious freedom from tradition, and an unspoken air of eagerness to see what was coming next. If the stupid would not at once cry "Spread-eagleism," I might venture on the suggestion that Edith walked and stood nationally.

Mayhew admired his new sister-in-law

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frankly, and was at some pains to show her attention. This pleased Archie, and, in his pride at it, he accidentally undid some of the good effect, for his newly acquired veneer of American devotion to his wife so powerfully affected Tessie that she very unwisely demanded the same from Mayhew, which only excited deep disgust in her husband, and, in a measure, stopped his attentions to Edith.

Tessie was well-meaning, but tactless to a degree. Instead, therefore, of chalking her husband's cue at billiards, as she had always done ever since they were married, and even when they were engaged, upon seeing Archie quite naturally chalk Edith's, Tessie held hers out to Mayhew with her head on one side and a plaintive demand for a similar office. Mayhew only stared at her and told her not to be a fool, whereat she promptly took his advice, and was not a fool any more that evening. But, with her genius for knocking her head against a stone wall, her next attempt came a day later. Edith was easily chilled, and in her present condition was peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Her

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maid, Cephyse, always hovered around evenings with a chiffon which Archie invariably took from her, and with his own hands spread it across his wife's shoulders. Such things were trifles; Cephyse could quite as well have done it; but they pleased Edith, and Archie was amiable enough to humor her. The third evening Tessie saw this she could stand it no longer. Although she never had a cold in her life, she fetched a white, knitted, wool shawl and held it out to Mayhew. He took it, without knowing what she wanted.

"What shall I do with it?" he asked.

"Put it around me. I feel chilly."

Mayhew's short neck and red face became suffused with blood. (His father had died of apoplexy.) He flung the shawl on the floor.

"Have you no servants?" he cried. Then he cast a black look at Edith and strode out of the room, while Tessie humbly stooped, and, picking up the shawl, put it around herself, until, ten minutes later, panting with heat, she slipped it off and went outside for a breath of air.

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It seemed to Sir John that Edith was the object of everybody's interest, which was slightly hostile to begin with. Sir John was reminded of a paddock of horses into which a spirited, strange colt was admitted. The sniffings, the suspicious eyes, the advances and retreats, the silent nose-to-nose conferences among themselves before the regular inmates could bring themselves to let the handsome stranger crop his grass in peace, were all enacted over again in the drawing-rooms of Cawdor. Edith, by the very lift of her head and the flash of her eye, seemed to challenge inspection, and more than one in the party seemed determined to put her at a stiff hedge to see if she would go over it with a toss of her mane and a clean pair of heels.

Sir John clucked around her, to change the simile, like an old hen. He never saw her in a *tête-à-tête* with a woman that he did not make an excuse to draw near, and he never was disappointed in his suspicions. He was sure to hear a sentence beginning, "It's ver-r-ry ke-your-rious that you Americans," and so forth, and so on. The curiousness of

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American institutions seemed never to have been brought so near as by the advent of one of the strange breed introduced into their midst. Edith bore it well, but one could see by the occasional whitening of her thin nostrils that things were beginning to get on her nerves. Sir John fretted and fumed, but as yet Edith had not taken the bit in her teeth.

On the third evening the whole party was complete. Everybody who was expected had come. Archie came to the door of his wife's dressing-room and knocked.

"Edith, may I come in?" he said.

"Certainly, dear. Cephyse is not here. What is it?"

"I want you to be particularly smart to-night. I thought I would mention it to you."

"Why, what for, Archie?" asked his wife, opening her eyes.

"Well, I think it would please Sir John. He asked me what you were going to wear."

Edith flung back her head and laughed.

"Oh, dear Sir John," she said. "He ought to have been my grandmother."

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"Edith," said her husband, reproachfully, "he is very kind to take an interest in you, *I* think."

"And am I not kind to take such an interest in him?" cried Edith, irritably.

Her husband bent over her.

"What is it, dear one? Is anything troubling you? You never spoke so about Sir John before. I thought you were fond of him."

"I am fond of him. Next to you I love him better than anybody in the world. But can't you see how I am badgered?"

"Badgered?"

"Yes, badgered," cried Edith, savagely. "I suppose you know what a badger is? Tormented! Irritated! Nagged! Devilled!"

"Well, I have noticed that they have made you rather a target, but you seem to have lost so much of your furious pride in American institutions since you became an Englishwoman that I thought you didn't mind, as you used to mind in Cairo."

"Since I became a what?" asked Edith, ominously.

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"Well, you became an Englishwoman—a British subject, that is to say, when you married me," said Cavendish, apologetically.

"Did I?" said Edith, with a little crooked smile. Her breath came a trifle short. "Be satisfied, Archie. I will be smart to-night."

Cavendish kissed her and went out. When he was gone, Edith took a tortoise-shell hair-brush and flung it against the farthest wall. She smiled to see it shattered.

"Since I became an Englishwoman!" she ground out from between her teeth. "Since I became a—" she choked over the word.

"Cephyse," she cried, when her maid responded to her furious ring, "unpack my flame-colored chiffon."

Cephyse looked at her mistress in astonishment.

"Mais, madame. Ce soir?"

"Yes. To-night. I am going to—yes, for to-night I am going to be an *American*."

CHAPTER VIII

SIR JOHN had seen many beautiful women in his day, but when Edith Cavendish swept into the white drawing-room at Cawdor that night before dinner the old man fairly gasped.

Her gown was, indeed, flame-colored — every color of flame, from orange-red to buff, made of shimmering chiffon over satin, and so cunningly arranged that with every movement the jets blazed up afresh. Iridescent ornaments sparkled mysteriously whenever the colors changed, and seemed like the blue tips which waver upward from a fire of driftwood. Made by a less cunning artist or worn by a less refined woman, the dress would have been loud. But, as it was, Edith's graceful slenderness changed it from a blaze to an illumination.

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Nevertheless, the whole thing fairly leaped at you and took your imagination captive. While she was within sight you could look at no other woman and think of no other gown. Her arms were bare to the shoulders. Her white neck was hung with chains of topaz, and her hands were heavy with rings. She wore no gloves, nor even carried them as an affectation. Her fan was of carved amber and brilliant with plumage of a myriad of tropical birds of every shade from orange to ruby. Her glorious red hair was dressed high and was guiltless of a single ornament. From the delicate tendrils which curled at the nape of her warm neck to the wave as it swept from her low brow, it was a head upon which nature had done so much that art could add nothing to its beauty or its regal poise. Her eyes flashed like stars, and when Lady Mary Goddard, a few moments later, entered, several made the inward comment that she looked pale. But she was no paler than usual. It was that the brilliant American girl had absorbed all the color there was anywhere, and had en-

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veloped herself in it like Brunhild on her couch of flame.

When Mayhew caught sight of her, he whispered hurriedly to Tessie:

"Have Lady Munkittrick's and Edith's places changed at the table. I want that girl on my left to-night. Jove! She's the handsomest thing I ever saw."

So the duchess was on his right. He took her out, and Edith followed on the arm of Sir Wemyss Lombard. This Tessie had not intended, for Lady Mary had plainly showed her displeasure when she overheard her *fiancé* call Edith "a ripper." But Sir John, who sat opposite and next to the duchess, where she could spatter him at will, was plainly jubilant.

Edith felt the sensation she had created, but she controlled her inward excitement, and endeavored to hold herself in reserve. Sir John noticed that she refused wine. Mayhew insisted upon her glasses being filled, but they stood as they were, full to the brim, undisturbed.

The other women, on the contrary, if they

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felt the tension, prepared for it in quite the opposite way, and their glasses were emptied rapidly.

The first remark which caused Sir John's eyes to seek Edith's was one of Terence O'Gorman's.

"I was completely bowled over by my kiddie the other day. She has taken a great streak at studying the Bible—by way of contrast to her mother and father, I'm thinking—and she put me up against the Ten Commandments. I was giving tea to three pretty girls, when kiddie said, 'Dad-die, I think I could keep all of the Commandments except the adultery one. That, I am sure, I should break.' Such frankness, you may be sure, upset me as well as my tea. Most of it—the tea, I mean—ran up my sleeve, but I bucked up. 'And why not, kiddie?' I said. 'Because,' said she, 'it is so difficult to keep from wanting things that belong to other people.' At that my hair stood on end. Did she refer to my neighbor's ox and his ass, or my neighbor's wife and maid-servant? The girls were looking for

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the nearest tree, but I persevered, though terrified out of my life. 'What sort of things, kiddie?' said I. 'Oh, mostly rabbits and white mice,' she said. That let me out. You see, her infernal old-maid governess had told her that adultery meant envy."

"And so it does—pushed a bit further," said his wife.

Sir John was plainly delighted, but endeavored to conceal it out of deference to Edith's supposed puritanism. But to his surprise he found her smiling with the rest. Her intuitions were not at fault. She felt sure her time was coming later, and she had no intention of wasting either energy or ammunition.

The dowager and Lady Chartersea, at the other end of the table, were wrought up to fever heat by Edith's flame-colored gown. The dowager was manœuvring with her chin and plainly preparing for an attack. Finally it came, but came in such a guise that even Edith's nerve was sadly shaken.

"I can make no plans," came down the

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table on a moment of silence in the dowager's voice, "because I do not know the date of Edith's confinement."

With all her courage, Edith, who was speaking to Mayhew, could not keep the tell-tale blood from mounting from her white neck to the very waves of her hair. It was a painful, agonized blush—the like of which Mayhew never had seen before. Her eyes, too, gleamed with the smart of bitter tears, which she bit her lip to keep from falling. To hear brutally spoken of the dear secret which she and her husband could as yet only whisper of to each other in moments of shy yet delighted confidence! It cut her to the heart. Verily the dowager's shot had been aimed at the only vulnerable part of Edith's armor. Mayhew had looked up fiercely, stung to sudden sympathy by the anguish in Edith's face. But before he could interfere the dowager said:

"Tell us, Edith, when you expect to be confined?"

Sir John and Mayhew both looked as if ready to interfere, but Edith stopped them

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with a look. Without even turning her face in the direction of the dowager, she replied:

"Not until after the first of the year, Lady Mayhew."

Sir John drew a long breath. The duchess turned to him with a casual remark, having seen nothing, and Mayhew's hand for an instant gripped Edith's as it lay near his own, as he muttered:

"By Jove, Edith, you are the most wonderful woman I ever knew!"

But, to his horror, Edith, with her face still averted from the rest of the table, but looking directly into Mayhew's, let two tears overflow and run down her cheeks.

"See what you did," she said, still without moving, "by your sympathy. I could have kept those back if you had not spoken."

In another moment, behind her fan, she dashed their traces away and was herself again.

Sir John's face was a study. Involuntarily he kept drawing his fist to his shoulder and half-way extending his arm again as if practising for a blow.

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"What will you do, duchess," called Mrs. O'Gorman, across the table from her place at Sir Wemyss Lombard's left, "if Abernethy brings home an American bride?"

"Oh, Mrs. O'Gorman," said the duchess, "how can you suggest such a thing!"

"Spiteful little Irish cat," murmured the duchess to Sir John, but in a tone which plainly reached Mrs. O'Gorman. "She is just clever enough to know that that is the only thing I am afraid of from this absurd American tour of Abernethy's."

Sir Wemyss screwed his glass into his eye nervously. He alone knew of Abernethy's engagement to the American heiress. Edith also suspected, from letters from her cousin Cornelia Winthrop, but, though her ears were scarlet from this conversation, she steadfastly kept her face turned towards Mayhew.

"You won't call it an absurd tour if the altitude of the Rocky Mountains undoes the damage to Abernethy's chest which a Boer bullet inflicted," put in Sir Wemyss, pacifically.

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"No, I shouldn't," said the duchess. "But, all the same, I don't want him to marry one."

"Don't want him to marry which—a Boer bullet or a Rocky Mountain?" asked Mrs. O'Gorman, impertinently.

"Whatever are you talking about?" demanded the duchess, whose sense of humor was not keen.

"The dear duchess is so obscure," murmured Mrs. O'Gorman, plaintively.

"Obscure? I, obscure?" spattered the duchess, with increasing color.

"Oh, only in your meaning, dear duchess, believe me," said the Irishwoman, fluttering her eyes demurely at Sir John.

The duchess was plainly irritated. She grumbled under her breath, and shot vindictive glances at Mrs. O'Gorman. She always felt that the keen-witted Irishwoman was making game of her, but she never knew how nor in what manner. Now her little, green eyes, with their red rims, roved around the table, seeking whom to attack. Finally they rested on Edith. She was an American.

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"She's off!" gurgled Mrs. O'Gorman, the duchess prepared to speak.

"Isn't it ke-yourious," said the duchess not lowering her voice, "to find Mrs. Cavendish speaking with a broad *a* and lacking the shrill voice of most Americans? She must have been educated abroad, don't you think, Sir John?"

"I believe that she never was away from America until a year ago, when she began her travels abroad," returned Sir John "but from her description of her country I find it a most cultivated and enlightened land and full of charm to the English mind."

"Fancy!" said the duchess. "I always imagine it still one of our colonies."

"My mind has been greatly disturbed lately," said the bishop, overhearing these remarks, "by the outrages against negroes in the States."

He glanced aggressively at young Mr. Cavendish as he spoke, and Edith laid down her fork and took up her fan.

"Isn't it ver-ry ke-yourious," said the

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duchess to Sir John, but with her eyes on Edith, "how the Americans hate their blacks? I am told that they never invite them to dine. Now, for my part, I should not consider it at all lowering to be invited to dine with a negro. Would you, Mrs. Cavendish?"

"You may consider American negroes as your equal, duchess, if you like," said Edith, coolly. "They are not mine."

The duchess colored.

"Would you refuse to go out to dinner on the arm of one?" she inquired. "Surely you could not bring yourself to insult your hostess, if she had assigned him to you?"

Edith laughed a trifle scornfully.

"I am Southern born, madam," she said, "and such an insult has never been offered me."

"But your President dined with a negro," put in the bishop.

"I am not responsible for the acts of others," said Edith. "The duchess asked me what *I* would do."

"This President is the first one to make

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an issue of the negro by such an act," said the Duke of Strowther, speaking directly to Edith for the first time. "President McKinley always avoided forcing a crisis."

"And there you have the difference between a politician and a statesman," said Edith.

"Has it, then, come to such a pass, after all these years, and all your boasted progress and civilization," said the bishop, pompously, "that you are not yet willing to accept the negro as a social equal?"

"It has, indeed, come to such a pass," said Edith, politely. "We have not yet reached the point where we can bear the stench of a field-hand at our dinner-tables."

The bishop gasped. Sir John's hand closed convulsively on the damask cloth. He leaned back in his chair, crossed his feet under the table, and drew a sigh of satisfaction. Edith was off at last. Her head was down; the bit was between her teeth, and he could see the whites of her eyes.

"I don't quite follow you, madam," said

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the bishop. "You refer, of course, to a mental—ah—quality."

"When I said stench? Not at all. I meant a physical, unbearable, impossible odor," said Edith, clearly.

The bishop hastily drank a glass of hock.

"Er—I had not heard—I did not know—" he murmured.

"You have, of course, attended a negro church on a reeking summer day or on a close night? You have been obliged to push your way through a crowd of typical negroes in a Southern State, where you see the negro on his native heath?"

She put these questions directly at the bishop. He made no reply.

Sir John, who had with difficulty held his tongue during this discussion, now broke in as if unable to keep silent another moment.

"Did you ever go to a Russian church on Christmas night, bishop, and stand for an hour in the reek of the wet fur chubas of the moujiks? Did you ever go through the steerage of an emigrant ship? Would you ask either a moujik or a Polish Jew or a

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Turk, fresh from the hold of a ten-day voyage, to give you his company at a dinner-table such as this?"

"All this," said the duchess, "is beside the question. The negroes we have here are clean, well-educated, intelligent, and rich."

"And the negroes we have in the South are the direct opposite," said Edith. "In the North there are a few thousands such as you describe. In the South are a few millions such as I describe. So please remember that when you mention the word negro to a Southerner it does not mean the single example of the president of a colored college, but it indicates him of the ignorance, the depravity, and the reek of which the masses he knows and lives among are composed."

The bishop shook his head.

"I think you are quite sincere, madam, but deeply prejudiced. Nothing that you have said causes me to regret my interest in the cause of the persecuted blacks."

"But surely," said Edith, leaning forward, "you do not take an active interest in the cause of the American negro when—pardon

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me—you have so many equally crying evils nearer home, and which are emphatically your own affair?"

"I do, Mrs. Cavendish," said the bishop. "I hope I am broad-minded enough to interest myself in remedying injustice and gross iniquity wherever it is called to my attention."

"Indeed! May I ask how you propose to cure this evil? We Americans have struggled with it for more than a generation."

The bishop was unaware of her irony.

"I have written a letter of protest in the name of the Church of England to the Governor of Arkansas, adjuring him to cease his horrible and inhuman custom of lynching and burning negroes—helpless, friendless black men—at the stake."

The bishop leaned back and folded his hands across his stomach.

"Oh, well," said Edith, easily, "the Governor will probably not be angry. He will only laugh and toss the letter aside as another instance of British impertinence."

A hush fell upon the company at this au-

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dacity. Edith let her eyes rest calmly on one after another, slowly waving her brilliant fan to and fro with a hand which did not tremble, for all she had flung her glove squarely in the face of the Established Church.

"The chit is plainly intoxicated," spat-tered the duchess. Sir John got the full benefit of her remark. He carefully wiped his cheek before replying.

"Her wine-glasses are just as they were, duchess. I have watched. She has not touched one of them."

The bishop was not offended, but he looked a trifle dazed.

"But, my dear Mrs. Cavendish," he said, "will not your people be pleased to learn the opinion of so great a nation as England—England who leads the world in the moral and religious world?"

"Why, would England be gratified to learn the opinion of so great a nation as America—America who has made such strides in all directions that she came, by a small one-hundred-day war, to be one of the

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Powers without whose consent you, none of you, dare act?"

"No, certainly not!" cried the bishop, stung out of his usual address. "What does England care what America thinks?"

Edith laughed. Sir John was clenching and unclenching his hand as encouragement to Edith to strike out.

"We care no more than you do," she said, airily. "And probably the Governor of Arkansippi is much too well-bred and too courteous a gentleman to write you any instructions on how to manage your laity or to suggest an improvement in your church government."

"The cases are not parallel," said the bishop.

"By Jove!" cried Sir Wemyss Lombard, speaking for the first time, "I think she has you there, bishop. The cases, to my mind, are quite similar."

"Well, England, thank God, has no such blot on her national escutcheon as the horrible case I read of in Arkansippi, where a mob composed of the best citizens of Bayou

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Cache burned a helpless, bound negro at the stake," exclaimed the bishop, with heat.

"How about blowing helpless, bound men to atoms from the mouths of cannon?" asked Edith, in a low, clear voice, looking directly into the angry eyes of the bishop.

There was a general uneasy shifting about the table. Everybody moved slightly. The women fanned themselves. The men reached for their wine-glasses.

"That," said the bishop, rallying, "is an act which we deplore, but which, at the same time, was thought to be the only way of impressing a salutary lesson on a race of barbarians."

"You have stated our position in the South admirably," said Edith. "For exactly the same reason do we perform the barbaric acts you deplore in us. The negro, who would remain contented for years in jail, awaiting trial or serving his sentence, warm, housed, and fed, shrinks in terror from bodily pain. But, of course," she added, apologetically, "to explain these well-known facts to a philanthropist such

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as you is carrying coals to Newcastle. How long did you live in the South the last time you were over?"

"The last time I was over?" repeated the bishop. "Over where?"

"In America—in the South, studying your subject at close range; fortifying yourself with facts and statistics before you would presume to address the head of a State—as doubtless a man of your just and courteous mind would do?"

"I—I never have been in the States at all," stammered the bishop.

"Never—I beg your pardon? I must have misunderstood you. I thought you said you wrote a letter of protest to the Governor of Arkansas concerning lynchings?" said Edith.

It was not an act countenanced by the best society, but the bishop actually mopped his brow. It was very warm. He made no attempt to reply, but the Southern girl had no intention of releasing him. She repeated her question. The bishop glanced around helplessly, but no one came to his rescue.

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The faces, to his astonishment, instead of expressing sympathy with the predicament he had got himself into, showed an inclination to mock. He was forced to reply.

"I did," he said. "But I was justified."

"May I ask what justified you?"

"The fact that no crime could possibly demand so extreme a penalty as being burned alive," said the bishop, with decision. He began to feel firm ground under his feet once more. He looked around for approval, but the others seemed to be waiting. They did not believe that the American had fired her last shot.

Edith's eyes flashed at this last assertion. It was what she had been after for the last quarter of an hour. She had baited the bishop with no little skill to drive him into just such an assertion.

"No crime?" she repeated, leaning forward for the first time, and lowering her voice instead of raising it. "No crime, did you say? Are you aware that the reason you are so ignorant of the Southerners' attitude on the negro question is because there

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is no way for you to inform yourself unless you live among them? Do you know that the details of the atrocities negroes commit on the white women are unprintable—even unspeakable? Do you know why we have no trials—why no husband, father, nor brother would go on the stand and testify to the unmentionable details of what those savage blacks have inflicted on their white dear ones? Would *you*?”

Her low voice held a thrill which caused a shiver to pass over her listeners. She brought the subject home to them. She made it personal.

“That is our only excuse—though we need no excuse to those who know. That is our only defence—though we scorn to defend ourselves. We know that the negro, as a negro—not the educated few, but the millions of the masses—never can be trusted. Honest for twenty years, in the twenty-first they will rob and kill—yet, first of all, they will outrage. No woman on a lonely plantation, no unprotected female anywhere in the South, is safe for one hour. The shot-

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gun is always loaded; the bell-rope is always at hand. That alarm means one thing. 'Come and bring your bloodhounds.' And there is worse," said the Southern girl, sinking her voice still lower. "If it is bad—if you shiver at the thought of grown women, who, at least, can protect themselves a little, what will you say to the children, not only young, immature girls, but two-year-old, white girl-babies raped, mutilated, killed, torn to pieces by a great, full-grown black man? Ah, that blanches your cheeks! Those things happen with us—God knows how often! Tell me, Sir Wemyss!—tell me, bishop!—tell me, Sir John!—would you, if that had happened to a baby in your relationship, would you write a letter of protest or would you be the first to apply the torch?"

Verily, as Sir John said, you could not turn the British stomach. There were white faces around the table, but there was no disgust that such a subject had been introduced. But if there had been disgust, even repulsion, the British mind is so just and determined to see fair play that the

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first thought of the diners would have been that the subject had been introduced by one of them, and the stranger had been driven to defend herself and her country from an unwarranted attack.

When the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room Edith was surprised at her reception there. Lady Mary Goddard came and sat by her, showing the greatest affability. Presently the Duchess of Strowther called across:

"Mary, my dear, be so good as to beg Mrs. Cavendish to come to us for a fortnight on the 20th. We shall be having some clever people for you, Mrs. Cavendish, and some good shooting for Archie."

Lady Mary urged her to accept, but Edith said she must consult her husband before promising. She knew, by the expression of the dowager's face, that the invitation was one to be highly prized, and that she must, in some manner, have conquered the duchess's prejudice.

Mrs. O'Gorman openly congratulated her on her brilliant defence from the bishop's

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attack. Edith was amazed. She felt that she had been rude, guilty of bad taste, that she had done as she never would have dared to do at an American dinner-table; that she had been impertinent to a clergyman, and violently and objectionably partisan. Yet, in some mysterious way, her behavior had broken through the wall of prejudice which had surrounded her ever since her arrival, and had admitted her to the charmed circle of intimacy with the elect.

Edith was so surprised she could hardly understand. She glanced around the room. Lady Munkittrick smiled at her, and Madame des Planches beckoned Edith with her fan. Every face was friendly except the dowager's and Lady Chartersea's. Lady Chartersea could not forgive Sir John's wedding-present of five thousand pounds.

When the men joined them the change was even more apparent. Edith was surrounded. The Duke of Strowther complimented her; Sir Wemyss Lombard, the silent, made the effort of his life and brought her news of her cousin Cornelia Winthrop,

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whom he had recently seen in Denver, and gave her the details of Lord Abernethy's engagement to Patricia Marsten, a secret as yet from his family. They were interrupted by Sir John, who promptly routed Lombard, and, possessing himself of Edith's fan, seated himself beside her, saying:

" 'Pon meh soul, Edith, let me talk to you or I shall burst. If I drew a long breath the buttons of meh waistcoat would scatter in every direction. I want to say that I'm proud of you. You—you went for 'em, Edith. You hit 'em in the eye. You nailed your colors to the mast, by Jove! I—'pon meh soul! I can't find words to tell you what you didn't do. You took them all captive—even the bishop said you were the cleverest woman he had ever met, and he used to swear by Nora O'Gorman. And the women—they are buzzing like a hive of bees. Listen! What did I tell you? Didn't I say there was only one way to do it? You've got 'em all."

He paused and they both glanced around the room, meeting nothing but friendly and

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sympathetic glances until they encountered the basilisk eye of the dowager, expressing both of him and Edith the coldest disapproval.

Sir John looked at Edith and she laughed.

"Wait," he said, "even her turn will come at last."

But Edith shivered.

"I don't know," she said, uneasily. "Such a discussion as that terrifies me, for it only increases the force of my intuitions. Ah, Sir John, for once you and I must disagree. I see in this affair only a personal triumph—the triumph of a good gown and the British admiration of courage and daring—and that I have succeeded, in spite of being an American, only shows that even British stubbornness can be overcome in individual cases by tact and decision of character. But what sinks the more deeply into my heart is this—the hostility, simply more or less veiled according to the company one is in, which England feels towards America. It is jealousy, pure and simple. Before the Spanish war it was contempt. You ignored us. Now it has risen

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a degree, and you are jealous of us. Your dislike of America is different from the dislike you feel towards any other country, for we once belonged to you, and you can't forget it. Our progress galls you. Your national greediness causes you constant twinges of regret to think you ever allowed us to get away from you. It crops out in your politics every little while, from the *Alabama* affair, which cost you sixteen million dollars to disavow, to your absurd coalition with your hereditary foe, Germany, on the Venezuelan question. And why? Simply to attack the Monroe Doctrine—to force us either to repudiate it or embroil us in a war. Little things like these show the wheels within wheels, and while your masses and our masses never see the real reason, the statesmen do. Ah, no. Never try to make me believe that England and America are national friends. Natural allies, if you please, for England would protect us against every nation except herself. And because I believe this I take no comfort out of my small triumph to-night. I feel a presentiment of evil."

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"Nonsense," said Sir John. "You are just nervous and overwrought. Why, what evil can befall us now?"

"I hope it is only that, but—there is a shadow over this house. I have felt it ever since I came."

Madame des Planches beckoned again, and Edith got up and trailed across the floor in her wonderful flame-colored gown, little dreaming how soon her fears were to be realized.

CHAPTER IX

THIS house-party at Cawdor had hitherto rather bored Edith. She saw nothing manly nor ennobling in killing more birds than one could eat, and gloating over the numbers slaughtered. She hated the exertion of following the men to see the sport over fields of stubble which scratched her boots and wounded her ankles, unaccustomed as her feet were to rough walking. Even luncheon with the sportsmen palled after the first day or two. She was pleased with the novelty of it while it lasted, but that was all. Edith disliked whatever was unbecoming, and rather than make a guy of herself, as Tessie and Lady Munkit-trick did in their shooting-clothes, she would have stayed at Fernleigh and given up Scotland altogether. But she was told that this was mere play compared to the

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discomforts of deer-stalking, and Tessie even essayed that.

But after the affair of the encounter with the bishop, in conjunction with the flame-colored gown, Edith fared better. The duchess found room in the carriage to ask Edith to drive with her instead of walking with the others. The American was no longer patronized nor ignored. By some mysterious alchemy she found herself one of them, and the effect was very soothing to her tingling nerves.

Cawdor lies in one of the loveliest regions of Scotland, and Edith was fond of wandering off by herself to explore. The dowager, whose disapproval of Edith hitherto had been largely an incidental, inherited sort of feeling, just as she disliked Dissenters and Germans at sight and not for any personal or specific reason, now suddenly developed into an enemy. She discovered that Edith bade fair to become a factor in the life of the Mayhew family. The fear even took shape that she might become a power to be dreaded, and the dowager had ruled too long not to

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guard her prerogatives with a jealous care. She saw Mayhew and Tessie pass from a toleration of the interloper to a genuine liking, not unmixed with a strong respect for her courage. And in the atmosphere of approval which now surrounded her, even the dowager could not fail to see that Edith's loveliness was developing into a glorious beauty which could not be ignored by the most stubborn, and which was an added threat.

The dowager, however, was incapable of wishing Edith any bodily harm, but she was in the state of mind to feel that if any calamity befell her from an outside cause she could be resigned to it, and so her conscience was clear.

Archie had frequently cautioned Edith about venturing too far or in an unknown direction, warning her that she never knew where the guns might be straying, and Edith promised to be careful.

The dowager, listening, found that she considered these warnings entirely superfluous and indicative of a pampering care of

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his wife which she very much disliked to see in an independent Englishman. Was not Edith a grown woman, and was she not more than able to take care of herself, both physically and mentally? It gave the dowager some satisfaction to see that these admonitions sat lightly upon Edith's mind, and that she continued her rambles.

It would have shocked the dowager if any one had whispered to her that evil was growing in her heart to such an extent that she hoped Edith would come to some harm. She was not analytical. She was English. Therefore she found herself watching the direction the men took every morning, listening to the head-keeper's suggestions, and then covertly keeping an eye on Edith until she started for her walk. The dowager never disturbed her mental poise by inquiring why she did this. She seldom examined into psychological enigmas, and therefore saved her brain much exercise.

But Edith continued to come and go in safety, and the dowager had all but lost—not hope, but perhaps her vigilance had some-

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what relaxed, when one day, about noon, she saw Mayhew hurrying back with one of the keepers. The day was enormously hot, and the exertion had made Mayhew's face purple.

"Where is Edith?" he gasped, as the dowager came hurrying down to meet him, every feature alert with hope.

"I don't know."

"I forgot to tell her—all of you—not to cross the lower meadow to-day, for McDonald told me that the old bull escaped last night and no one knows where he is. He is as dangerous as a tiger, and if Edith—"

He paused, panting horribly for breath.

"Mayhew, don't excite yourself!" cried Mrs. O'Gorman. "Sit down for a moment and I will look. I think Edith went another way."

"She had on a red dress, Nora," murmured Lady Munkittrick, following her.

Mayhew had sunk into a chair, tearing at his collar, but, roused by a scream from the women, he dashed his mother aside and ran out.

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The ladies of the party were streaming out across the lawn, waving their hands and shouting at a figure crossing the lower meadow, which sloped towards a strip of woods. Edith heard them and waved in reply. Then suddenly she understood, for an angry bellow came from behind her. She gave one look and began to run, but it seemed as if the house were a mile away.

Mayhew snatched a gun from the keeper and ran towards her, but, try as he might, Edith kept in a line between him and the maddened bull and he dared not shoot.

Suddenly Mayhew staggered and fell. A moment later a shot from the keeper's gun rang out and the bull sank to his knees.

But Edith no longer thought of her own danger. Without even looking behind her, she reached Mayhew first and attempted to lift him. Her screams told the others before they could get to him what had happened.

Geoffrey Cavendish was dead, and his brother Archibald was Earl of Mayhew.

CHAPTER X

EDITH'S condition immediately became so precarious that they told her a lie. They told her that Mayhew had only fainted and would recover, and by that means alone they saved her life on that first awful night after the tragedy.

The guests melted away from Cawdor as if by magic. For days not a sound was allowed to come to Edith's room but the footfalls of the nurses and her husband, who hovered over her in heart-broken anxiety.

During that trying time came the test and proof of Archie's devotion. His grief was pitiable. Hour after hour he knelt at her bedside, watching for a sign of life, and when urged, for his own sake, to leave her for a breath of air, he tramped up and down the corridor outside of her door, listening for a

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word of encouragement or even a look of hope on the face of nurse or doctor.

The Charterseas had refused to leave, and Sir John's ruddy face grew haggard with anxiety, for on Edith's will-power alone depended not only her life, but the hope of the long-expected heir to the earldom of Mayhew.

The funeral took place and still Edith did not know. The only words she ever whispered were to ask news of Mayhew. He was getting better—he was able to sit up—he had eaten well—he slept more comfortably—all these and other bulletins, which soothed Edith, were told her by her nurses under the doctor's express orders. False charts were even made out and shown her to quiet the questioning looks in her eyes as she listened to all they said and mentally disbelieved them. Still she was far from believing the dreadful truth. She simply thought he was worse than they dared tell her.

One day she whispered Sir John's name, and the old man, with tears raining down his

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face, came and knelt for a moment beside her bed. She was too weak to speak, nor did he. He only kissed one pale hand as it lay outside the coverlid. She smiled and made an effort to lift her face to his.

"May I?" he whispered.

She nodded her head slightly, and he kissed her with trembling lips, then scrambled to his feet and left the room on shaking legs.

"She kissed me, Archie!" he whispered, ecstatically. "She offered of her own accord. She did it to comfort me. She knew meh old heart must be almost broken. Nurse," he cried, catching the woman's hand, "don't let my visit hurt her! She only sent for me for my sake—because she knew I was half crazy. Don't let her kindness kill her, will you, nurse? Jove, Archie! Always thinking of the happiness of others before her own! What did she care about being scratched by my old prickly mustache on her soft little mouth? But she knew I'd remember it in meh coffin. God bless her! Archie, if it's a boy, he is meh heir. Remem-

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ber that. He gets all I have except Lady Chartersea's third. Do you think I don't appreciate the fight that little girl is making for the child's life? Gad, Archie! It's in her eyes. The devil himself has not her determination. She is holding onto life by sheer will-power, and her boy gets all I have. By the Lord Harry, he gets it even if he is a *girl!* D'ye hear? Edith sha'n't be cheated of her reward even if it's a girl. I'll change meh will this very day. God bless meh soul! What was I thinking of to make it contingent upon the child's being a boy? Archie, old man, cheer up! She's going to pull through. The nurses say so and the doctors say so. By Jove, and, sick as she was, to think of her kissing the old man!"

The days slipped into weeks, and the weeks into months, and still Edith lingered on the border-land. The shock had been so great, and the hopes of her recovery meant so much, that they took no risks.

From her bed she watched the leaves redden and fall, and the distant blue hills turn white with frost and snow. Still she had

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seen no one except her husband, and on rare occasions Sir John.

The dowager fretted and fumed. Was Sir John to be allowed privileges which she did not enjoy? She considered all this fuss made over Edith's condition pure nonsense. Nobody had ever fussed so over her before her children were born, nor over Tessie. She firmly believed that Edith was largely shamming in order to keep up the excitement. She did not believe in coddling the sick. She did not approve of Edith's being kept in ignorance of Mayhew's death. But for her inexcusable carelessness he would not have died. He would be alive to-day. His death lay at Edith's door, and as soon as she saw her she meant to tell her so. The dowager was not one to shirk an unpleasant duty. What if it did hurt Edith to know the truth? It was right to grieve for the dead. Then let her grieve. It wouldn't kill her to shed a few tears for poor Mayhew.

The more Sir John talked of Edith's kindness in sending for him, the more injured

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the dowager became. Lady Chartersea, always attentive, helped matters along.

"Has she sent for you yet, dear Lady Mayhew?" she said.

"Not yet," said the dowager. "Probably she does not want to disturb me. Some people cannot bear a sick-room, and Edith was always considerate, but some time soon I shall just slip in for a moment without consulting her."

"It would only be kind, I think," said Lady Chartersea.

After that the dowager watched her opportunity, and one afternoon when both Sir John and Archie had gone for a walk, the nurse left the room for a moment, and in an instant the dowager had entered it.

The great chamber was strangely silent. Edith, with her face the color of the pillows, lay in the canopied bed, her thin features sharply outlined against the whiteness. Her eyes were closed, and only the ticking of the clock and the crackling of the fire made any sound, but at the noise of the dowager's

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stiff crape rustling across the floor, Edith opened her eyes.

When Sir John and Archie entered the house, an hour later, an air of confusion prevailed. A mounted groom dashed past the library windows. Doors opened and closed. The nurses were hurrying to and fro giving orders to the frightened servants, and the dowager was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly shriek after shriek rang through the great house. Sir John, forgetting the doctor's orders, dashed up-stairs on the heels of Archie, who leaped four steps at a time.

"What has happened? Is Lady Mayhew worse?" cried Archie of an agitated nurse. She hesitated to reply and looked appealingly at Sir John.

"Out with it, woman!" he cried. "Tell us the whole truth."

"The dowager countess, my lord, went into Lady Mayhew's room in my absence and told Lady Mayhew that the earl was dead, and that his death lay at her door."

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"And Edith—" gasped Archie. "My wife—"

"Lady Mayhew is delirious, my lord. We have sent for Dr. Paisley. I think I hear him now."

The nurse hurried away, terrified at her daring. Sir John pulled Archie into a room across the corridor from Edith's room, where they could watch for the doctor.

At first neither spoke. Archie strode up and down, his face white with the terrible anger of the silent man. The sobs and shrieks from the sick-room came muffled to their ears, but the sounds fell upon raw nerves. Finally Archie spoke.

"Sir John, I believe this is the end. My mother has killed my wife."

Sir John looked up with quivering lips, clenching and unclenching his hands. Then his composure gave way, and he flung his arms on the table, sobbing like a child.

"That damned old woman!" he muttered, through his tears. "She has hated Edith from the first—*before* the first! She hated her before she ever saw her. And now she

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has killed both your wife and your son. If she has, if Edith dies, I'll murder the old she-devil with meh own hands, if I swing for it. But I won't be here to see it. I sha'n't live through this. It will kill me, too."

Sir John had never broken down before, and Archie was doubly alarmed. Even when his father, Sir John's best friend, had died, Sir John's grief had been under the control of his iron will, but at the sound of Edith's mental agony, the old man cast pride and self-control to the winds and gave up to the luxury of his grief.

When the doctor came the dowager entered the room where Sir John and Archie still watched.

"Is Edith much worse? Can I do anything?" she said.

Her son turned and faced her with blazing eyes.

"Leave this room, mother, and never dare to show yourself to me again while we are under this roof. If my wife dies, I never wish to look upon your face again."

Some women would have remonstrated,

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but the dowager knew better than to brave the white wrath in the countenances of the two men. She turned without a word, but she made a gesture of despair. Her only emotion was that of mortification that she could have made such a mistake. She had a poor opinion of the fragile constitutions of American women, and of Edith's in particular. It was unpleasant for the time being, but if Edith and her baby died, Archie would marry again—men are all alike—and this time it would probably be an English girl. The dowager did not believe that the Lord she had worshipped for sixty years would so afflict her as to give her another foreign daughter-in-law. In the mean time, her policy would be to make herself as small, as unobtrusive, and as deferential as possible.

It seemed to the anxious watchers that the doctor never would make his reappearance. He had been in there so long.

When he finally came, the gravity of his face confirmed their worst fears. Archie could not speak.

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"What is it, doctor?" stammered Sir John.

"Lady Mayhew is prematurely ill," he said, "and I have wired to London for Sir William and Dr. Lockholtz. The case is too serious for me to undertake alone."

"Is there any hope?"

"I will not deceive you. There is but a slight one. My main reliance hitherto has been in Lady Mayhew's iron will. She was determined to recover and bear her child. I never saw so brave a fight made by any woman in the whole course of my professional career. But—pardon me, Lord Mayhew!—the shock she received to-day by your mother's accidentally revealing to her, by her mourning garments, the fact of your brother's death, which we have so carefully endeavored to conceal from Lady Mayhew, has induced so violent a fever that she is delirious, and thus my hope of her assistance is cut off. I wanted to ask something. In case—"

The doctor hesitated and looked earnestly into the drawn faces of the two men who hung upon his words.

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"Go on!" said Archie. "Ask anything."

"In case we cannot save both lives—"

"My God, doctor!" burst from the younger man's lips. "My God, can you ask? Save my wife at the cost of everything."

"I only thought," murmured the doctor, "that in case of an heir—when so much depends—"

"In case of a hundred heirs," cried Sir John, "save that girl! Don't let her die, doctor. Don't let her slip away."

"I have by no means given up hope," answered the doctor. "If we can reduce this fever and remove the hallucinations which cause her such grief—"

"What hallucinations? What does she say?" asked Sir John.

As the doctor again hesitated, Mayhew broke in, commandingly:

"Pray be frank. Be quite open with us, doctor, if you wish us to understand the full gravity of the case. A reticence out of a mistaken sense of delicacy is no kindness to men in our condition of anxiety."

The doctor bowed and proceeded:

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“Lady Mayhew merely exhibits the ravings of a disordered brain. The shock of seeing the dowager countess in such deep mourning—quite accidental it was on the dowager’s part: I fully understand that—naturally upset Lady Mayhew. She raves that the earl’s death lies at her door—that it is all her fault—that but for her he would be alive to-day; and—the most unfortunate turn of all—that both the dowager countess, your mother, Lord Mayhew, and the Dowager Countess Theresa, think that your wife purposely exposed herself to danger in the late earl’s sight to induce him to an exertion certain to cause his death, in order that you might inherit the title. A most deplorable hallucination. A most unfortunate mistake; but you commanded me to be frank, Lord Mayhew, in order that you might better understand the difficulties we must work under. Believe me, this casts no aspersions on your mother’s kindly visit to the sick-room. Lady Mayhew heard none of these things from the dowager countess. They are but the fancies of a brain disor-

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dered by a terrible shock, which her weak system was in no condition to withstand."

"Thank you, Dr. Paisley," said Archie, as the doctor rose. "Thank you, especially for your frankness. It enables me to understand the peculiar conditions Lady Mayhew must fight under. Could I see her? Just for a moment?"

"Not now. It would be most unwise. The first moment she sleeps you shall be called, but let me warn you to expect a great change in her appearance. Her beautiful hair has been sacrificed at last. The nurses tried to save it, for it was so magnificent, but I dared not consent. You will exercise the greatest self-control, I am sure."

"You may be sure," said the young man, pressing the doctor's hand. He forbore to look at Sir John, and, when the doctor had returned to the sick-room, he walked to the window.

Presently he turned, but his face was so changed that Sir John started.

"The doctors will be here early in the morning, Sir John. I shall meet them at

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the station and tell them the truth," he said.

"No, Archie," said Sir John, laying a trembling, eager hand on Mayhew's arm; "that is not for one of the Cavendish blood. Leave it to me. I am not a relative. Spare yourself the shame of it, meh boy. I will be just."

"It is because of the shame of it that I must speak," said Mayhew. "The Cavendish blood must bear the Cavendish shame. It is like you to offer, brave old friend, but I will not shirk. I have not always protected my wife from my mother as I should, but she never complained, and often I did not see. Let me make what amends I may. She may not be with us long, and it will lessen, in some slight degree, my self-reproach. While, if she lives—my God in heaven, Sir John, if that brave, unselfish spirit lives—I—I shall have learned to appreciate her!"

Sir John wrung the younger man's hand in a silence he could not break. But words were not necessary. Sir John had always understood, and Mayhew understood at last.

CHAPTER XI

A TINY, tiny bundle, wrapped in fleecy white, which never could be placed out of sight of two large, mournful eyes in the canopied bed. Two wistful eyes, above cheek-bones over which the skin was drawn with painful sharpness. The nose, pinched and white with a woman's mortal agony; those transparent hands lying so still above the counterpane, the finger-tips shrivelled and bloodless, and the frail body, which scarcely showed the outlines of a human figure—these were all that remained of the spirited creature who had come so blithely to Cawdor four months ago.

But in those eyes the vital spark burned—the spark of determination which seemed to be all which held life in that fragile body in its white wrappings. The young mother had but one thought, waking or sleeping,

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and that was to keep the frail lamp of life burning in her tiny son until she was strong enough to hold him in her arms. After that —when once her arms could close around him and clasp him close, close to his mother's breast, and she would ask no further favors of fate! Live? He must live. Had she not all but given her life for his? Had she not fought death, inch by inch, through many weary months, and was she one to give up the fight in the moment of victory? Had her duty but even begun? Was she not responsible for his premature appearance, and was it not her fault that he had entered the bitter, weary struggle of life equipped with only a portion of his rightful strength and vigor? Had not every other child a better chance than he? And was it not her duty to give to him every thought of her brain, every beat of her heart, every ache of her long-
ing arms until she had made up to him for his life's handicap? Oh, the anguish of her eyes when she thought of all this, and then realized her mortal weakness! Oh, health, make haste! Oh, strength, come swiftly!

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But in spite of her impatience, day after day crawling slowly by brought a little added vigor, and her baby, in spite of anxious faces and sinking hearts, clung feebly to life and turned his little face less and less reluctantly to the long, hard journey before him. And, day by day, the wanness began to leave his mother's cheeks, and the color drifted into her pale lips, and the light of hope and of a deathless vow of love and constancy glowed more and more brightly in the sombre depths of her yearning eyes.

And through it all her husband lay like a faithful dog at her door. He refused to go to his rooms, but slept, fully dressed and rolled in a blanket, on a couch in the corridor, and, hour after hour, he waked and listened and held his breath for a sound from her sick-room.

Those were heart-breaking days for Archie Cavendish, but they were soul-building, and his young wife need have no fear that all her anguish had been a wasted effort, for the new Earl of Mayhew awoke to hope, after days of despair and nights of bitter remorse

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—a new man with a new purpose and a new aim in life.

As for Sir John, his pulse fluctuated with Edith's. When she began to mend, straightway the old man dismissed his doctor and grew more fiercely irritable towards his wife. These were unmistakable signs of returning health, and, with the first indications of spring, Sir John tramped up and down beneath Edith's windows, a rejuvenated man.

Then came the great day when Edith could sit up, and the still greater day when she could be dressed and lifted to a chair, and the greatest day of all when she bade good-bye to Cawdor.

During all Edith's illness, Tessie had shown herself in her noblest guise. Freed forever from the dictatorial influence of her husband, who, though a good enough husband after his kind, had been one of the sort who treated his wife as something between a child to be instructed and a block of wood which could feel neither pain nor pleasure, she found, for the first time, from Archie's

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treatment of herself, what Edith's influence had done for a Cavendish.

When Edith became well enough to talk, she and Tessie had many hours together, in which Edith's remorse and bitter grief for Mayhew's death were somewhat lessened by knowledge of the fact that they exceeded the emotion of the widow herself, and Tessie heroically endeavored to lighten the burden which Edith had assumed for a death which left Tessie almost dependent upon Archie's bounty.

But in this Tessie was again fortunate, for, after a consultation with his wife, Archie settled Fernleigh, which was his own personal property, on Tessie and her children, and a suitable income to maintain herself as befitted her rank. Five thousand pounds a year to Tessie, who had never known what it was to have money of her own, appeared a princely sum, and, crediting this as much to Edith as to Archie, in a burst of gratitude Tessie named both her girl babies after her sister-in-law, one to be called Edith and the other Joyce.

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Edith was deeply touched by this act of Tessie's, for it showed, more than anything else could have done, how completely she had become a member of the family—at last, but, as might have been expected, it put the dowager into one of her towering fits of rage.

The dowager had long ago gone back to Mintern Court. She left Cawdor without a word to her son, with the laudable idea that, as possession was nine points of the law, to be established at Mintern would at least increase the difficulty of dislodging her.

But in this she had counted on Edith's oft-tested forbearance, and on the son Archibald she knew. She was quite unprepared, therefore, for the peremptory letter from the new Archibald who was Earl of Mayhew, bidding her remove at once to Dower House, and have Mintern prepared for the reception of Edith and her son.

The dowager almost swooned when she read this letter. Dower House, compared to Mintern Court, was as a cottage to a palace. In addition to this, it was in a most

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remote and inaccessible spot in the north of England, a full day's journey from Mintern and Arlesworth, and almost out of the world, as far as London was concerned. If only Archie had said Fernleigh—Fernleigh, which was only a few hours drive from both Lady Chartersea and Edith, and where she could so easily get at them both. She so far forgot her pride as to write a most humble letter to Archie, calling him "Mayhew" for the first time, and begging to be sent to Fernleigh instead of exiled to Dower House. But, to Archie, this suggestion added insult to injury. He regarded it as sacrilege that his mother, the author of all his undoing, should suggest living in the house of his honeymoon, and he wrote back a letter full of grim rejoicing that it lay in his power, as Earl of Mayhew and head of the house of Cavendish, to remove his tormentor forever from his path and the path of his wife, all too thorny hitherto, but which henceforth, by the grace of God, he meant to strew with nothing more difficult than rose-leaves for her tender feet to press upon.

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At first this letter put the dowager in such a rage that the girls and poor Inchworthy fled in terror and locked the school-room door, but the dowager was a woman of resources, and, after a second and third reading, the comforting thought occurred to her that her main reliance lay, after all, in Edith. This letter was a man's first indignant protest and futile attempt at revenge. A woman's influence should be brought to bear upon him, and Edith's intervention would soften him.

To this end the dowager bestirred herself, and Mintern Court was freshened, smartened, and decorated with flowers as if for the return of a conquering hero. Fortunately she dared not attempt any such changes as she had indulged her riotous fancy in at Fernleigh, but, what with arches over the gates and such outer decorations and signs of rejoicing as she dared essay, Mintern was decked suitably to receive its first heir, the long-expected heir, Viscount Roxbridge, who restored riches and affluence to the house of Cavendish.

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Nor did she make any move towards the Mintern, beyond giving orders to the Dowry House opened and prepared for coming. She and the girls removed the wing of the house not often used except in cases of large house-parties, and remained in order to give Edith a suitable welcome. She hoped, by her modest, deferential, and unobtrusive behavior, to be allowed to stay perhaps only on sufferance at first, but afterwards as a fixture too firmly established to dislodge.

So it came to pass, through the desperate motive of sycophancy, that the wish of the American girl had been granted. To her arrival as a bride was offered to her arrival as a mother, and to her little whom she had held in her arms during the drive from the railway station, except that her husband took him from her, in response to the shouts of the people for the viscount, and held him up to be seen. Even at those exciting moments, when the shouts were loudest and caps were thrown highest into the air, Edith's eyes were

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eted hungrily on the laces of the little, soft, white bundle, which were all that could be seen of the Mayhew heir, until the precious morsel was again placed in her arms. Her pale, thin face, looking so small under her great velvet hat, and her head covered over with short, curling rings of hair, but, most of all, her eager, yearning, jealous eyes, moved the people to the intensest feeling. Simple as they were, rude and unlettered, cottagers and tenants, poor in this world's goods, yet most of them were rich in the experience of motherhood and fatherhood, and they understood the silent message of suffering in young Lady Mayhew's altered appearance. Tears sprang to women's eyes, and men turned aside with gruff words to hide a certain quiver of the throat which they felt was an unmanly sign of feeling in a free-born Briton.

The illness of young Lady Mayhew had done wonders, too, in cementing the friendships she had begun to form at Cawdor. The friendliest of letters and telegrams poured in upon her with congratulations upon her re-

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turn to Mintern, which seemed heartfelt. The costliest presents were showered upon the young heir, and, with each sign of goodwill, his mother's step grew lighter and her pale cheeks took on a more healthful tinge. By such subtle signs as these, which would have gone unnoticed by her husband six months ago, he now, with his sharpened perceptions, realized that much of his wife's illness had been mental, and he felt, with an anguish which was like physical pain, that if Edith had been made happier in her brief married life, much of her physical agony might have been spared her.

He said nothing when he found his mother and sisters still at Mintern, being apparently disarmed by her cordial assurances that she had only remained to give them a suitable welcome. Nor did Edith complain. They both submitted to the dowager's superintendence of the rejoicing of the tenants, the school-feast, and the hundred-and-one small ceremonials which she had arranged for, all of which Edith would have gone wild over if they had occurred a year ago.

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When, however, they were all over, and their life had returned to its routine, the dowager still made no move to go. The Bishop of Ardsley had so far forgiven the American girl that he wrote her a most charming letter of congratulation, and, begging that she bore him no grudge, hoped to be allowed to perform the ceremony of christening.

When Edith acquiesced to this arrangement, the dowager announced her determination to remain for the christening, and was for delaying the ceremony for another month or so, urging "the baby's feebleness." But at her use of that word Edith's gray eyes blazed black, and, although she said nothing, her husband saw her emotion and resolved to act accordingly. He was no longer deceived in mistaking her self-control for apathy, and the day was set according to her wishes for the baby's four months' anniversary, which would fall on a Sunday in about a fortnight's time.

The invitations were limited, as, indeed, the strength of both mother and child had to be considered.

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When Tessie came, Edith said to her:

"Dearest sister, I want to ask if you will be one of the godmothers of my boy, and let us give him Geoffrey's name. If he grows up with the thought before him that he is named for a noble English gentleman, who, knowing his own danger, gave his life, simply and bravely, for that of a woman, dying at his post, in the discharge of his duty, as a brave soldier must, my boy need have no more glorious example of the duty of a man and a gentleman."

And at this, Tessie, who had never thought of her husband's death in this light before, fell on her knees at Edith's side and sobbed piteously, beginning, perhaps, for the first time to understand that side of poor Mayhew's character.

"You shall hold the baby, too," Edith went on. "I want — oh, Tessie, dear — I want to do everything for you that I can! You need never give a thought to your children's future. We will attend to that."

And Tessie, unaccustomed to such, or, indeed, any consideration whatsoever, only

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sobbed for answer, being unable to speak for her tears of pride and gratitude, for the Duchess of Strowther, the other godmother, had actually begged permission to hold the child, but Edith had written to say that that honor had been reserved for the widow of the man to whom both she and her boy owed their life.

So, on a sunny morning late in May, the chapel at Mintern was turned into a bower of spring loveliness, and the American girl, with her trembling hand hidden in her husband's, and her breath coming pantingly from between her parted lips, witnessed the lovely ceremony which gave the name of Geoffrey Alleyn Chartersea Cavendish to the new Viscount Roxbridge.

But oh, the baby lay so still, so still in Tessie's arms! If only he had cried, or struck out with his little fists as other and stronger children do. But there was no movement beneath the priceless laces which swept downward over Tessie's crape-laden gown, not even one feeble cry to disturb the stillness which grew horrible to his mother and

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pounded on her ears as if she had heard the roaring of cannon. She would have started up from her seat to go to him and make sure he was alive, if her husband, who was watching her with the keenest anxiety, had not quieted her with a firm, controlled pressure of her frail hand, held so closely in his own.

Sir John, who was one of the godfathers, a member of the royal family being the other, openly wiped his eyes during the ceremony, nor cared who saw him.

Finally it was all over, luncheon had been presided over by the dowager, and the guests had all departed with the exception of the Charterseas.

As the Duke and Duchess of Strowther, with Lady Mary, were journeying back by the afternoon train to Coomb Abbey, the duchess was strangely silent. The duke dosed in his corner of the railway carriage, and Lady Mary's beautiful face had a wistful expression which her mother noticed.

"I am seldom touched by anything—I won't allow myself to be," said the duchess,

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at last, "but I own to a most queer and uncomfortable feeling. I—upon my word—I don't know what to make of Edith's face."

"I am afraid she is going to die," said Lady Mary, gently.

"What's that?" said her father, opening his eyes. "Edith Cavendish die? You never were more mistaken in your life. If ever I saw a deathless determination to live and care for her boy, I saw it in that brave woman's eyes to-day. It made my old heart thump to see such a mother-look in a girl's face. And such will-power! I'll tell you what it put me in mind of. It made me understand something of what John Chartersea is forever dinning in my ears about the spirit of the Americans. He says you can't beat 'em, and if Edith Cavendish is a fair example, I'll swear I more than half believe him."

After this unexpected speech, the duke pulled his travelling-cap over his eyes and composed himself to sleep, satisfied, after the manner of English husbands, in having said everything that was essential to the en-

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tire subject and having done all the thinking for his womankind.

Lady Mary, feeling that this softened mood of her mother's indicated an occasion too auspicious to be let slip, shyly laid her hand in the duchess's purple glove and said, softly:

"Did you know that Wemyss had persuaded his uncle Padelford to go into the great Olla Mining Company which Abernethy has organized, and that—"

The duchess looked at her daughter out of her shrewd little, green eyes.

"Have you seen the *Times* this morning?" she asked.

"No," said Lady Mary, in terror ; "what does it say?"

"That James Padelford has had another stroke of paralysis, and is not expected to live the day out."

Lady Mary's lovely face flushed crimson. Sir Wemyss Lombard, her lover, was James Padelford's heir.

"Oh, mother," she whispered, "I don't dare to speak for fear of saying the wrong thing."

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The duchess turned her hard, old face towards her daughter.

"Never mind, Mary. I hope I am shrewd enough to learn my lesson whenever I see it, and rather than stamp the look on your face that Marcia Cavendish has stamped on Edith's, I will let you marry Wemyss Lombard whether Padelford dies or not."

Lady Mary, after a moment of speechless surprise, flung her arms around her mother's neck like any milkmaid.

"Oh, mother, dear," she whispered.

"It won't be considered a brilliant nor even a suitable match," grumbled the duchess, taking her purple satin bonnet-string out of her mouth, where her daughter's embrace had crushed it, "but you care so much, your looks seem to be going, so that I don't know if you could do any better."

It was ungracious, but the girl was too delighted to stick at trifles.

"He is sure to be rich in a few years," she said, consolingly.

"Yes," answered the duchess, doubtfully; "James Padelford has had one stroke before

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this, and Chidworth is one of the show places of England—far handsomer than Coomb, they tell me.”

“Then, too, if the mine and the Denver Trolley Company should prove what Abernethy and Wemyss think, he would be considered a good match by anybody,” said Lady Mary, proudly.

The duchess eyed her daughter curiously.

“That is quite true, and, besides that, we would get the credit of having let you marry him for love—which always counts. It may even, in the case of a court beauty like you, create a sensation. But it does distress me,” she added, with a sigh, “to hear my daughter so glib with commercial terms. It is that deadly American influence.”

Lady Mary shuddered and hastened to switch the conversation back to the softening scenes of the morning. As yet she was the only member of the family who knew that her brother, Lord Abernethy, the heir to the title, was also going to marry an American girl.

Where would it all end?

CHAPTER XII

EDITH, by not appearing at the luncheon, was rested sufficiently to see the members of the household in the afternoon, and hear Sir John's account of how things had gone. The Charterseas were staying at Mintern for a week.

They all gathered in the great, sunny, south room, which was where the baby spent his afternoons, it being an idea of his mother's that sunshine should play a large part in the upbuilding of his tiny strength.

Inchworthy and the girls remained for a few moments only, leaving the Charterseas and Robert Gordon, the dowager, Tessie, and the Mayhews to discuss the morning's great event.

The dowager was in high feather, and, so far from meeting with any opposition from Edith and Archie, she was emboldened, by

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their apparent acceptance of the situation, into usurping more and more the prerogatives of mistress of the house. It was she who greeted the others as they came in. It was she who took the baby from the nurse and held him up for inspection. It was she who answered all the questions, no matter to whom they were put.

Sir John was nervous and distrait. He drummed with his long, thin fingers on the arms of his chair, a sure sign of mental disturbance. Lady Chartersea felt that the excitement of the morning had been bad for him, and said so. It was all Sir John needed to set him off. He turned on her fiercely.

"Once for all, madam," he said, with twitching eyebrows, "let us hear no more about excitement being bad for me. Haven't I proved over and over again, in the last year, that each doctor I have tried was an unmitigated ass? Didn't the doctor in Cairo tell me that I would die if I travelled when I did, and did even the chasing of Edith the length of the Mediterranean, with a field-glass in meh hand the entire way, finish

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me? Didn't Dr. Paisley, at Cawdor, tell me that the excitement of the household was killing me? Well, did it? Am I a dead man? Look at me, and tell me that! Am I a dead man yet?"

"Why, no, Sir John," said Lady Chartersea, pacifically. "Pray, don't excite yourself. Certainly you are not a dead man. Whatever can have put such an idea into your head?"

"I tell you, madam, excitement is good for me. I thrive on it. I never felt better in meh life."

He mechanically took a long envelope from his pocket and looked vindictively at his wife, then put it back again, as if the time was not yet ripe.

"Edith," said Robert Gordon, "you grow handsomer every day. Lady Mary ought to hate you, but she doesn't. Sir John, doesn't she look stunning in that white velvet tea-gown, with just that heavy gold cord and tassel around her waist? Archie, you must have Sargent paint her in that."

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"Wait till my hair grows a little longer," said Edith, with a smile.

"Dear, I think your hair is more beautiful now than it ever was," said her husband. "It reminds me of that Psyche on porcelain which hangs in the blue drawing-room, now that it is just long enough to draw into that bunch of loose curls at the back of your head. Your profile is most artistic. Isn't it, Sir John?"

"Edith knows what I think of her," said Sir John, gruffly. "If she doesn't, she is deaf and blind and stupid into the bargain."

The dowager was holding the baby, and Edith had that anxious expression in her eyes which you sometimes see in the eyes of a dumb animal when strange hands are fondling her young.

She finally seated herself in a high-backed chair of carved rosewood and said, gently:

"I will take the baby now, if you please, Lady Mayhew."

"No, Edith, my dear, you are not strong enough to hold him, and it's better for the little chap to sleep now, anyway. I'll just

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lay him in his cradle," said the dowager, fussily.

"Nurse," said Archie, without turning his head, "give the baby to Lady Mayhew, instantly."

The dowager blinked her eyes in astonishment, but submitted without a word, as became a dutiful Englishwoman.

A timid knock on the door, just here, followed by a whispered parley, resulted in the nurse coming up to Edith and saying:

"Your ladyship, the head - gardener's daughter is without, a most respectable young married woman, with her little baby. She begs to know if she might let him look for a moment at the young viscount. It would give her much pleasure, if your ladyship would not count it an intrusion."

Edith's eyes kindled.

"We should all be glad to see her baby. Have her come in. They are both healthy—are they, nurse?"

"Oh, your ladyship, trust me for knowing that before I dared ask to bring them in."

"Isn't that dear of her, to bring her baby

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to call on mine!" cried Edith, in delight, as the nurse left the room. She seemed more pleased by this girl's attention than when his Royal Highness consented to stand godfather to her boy.

The head-gardener's daughter came in shyly, her black eyes snapping with excitement. She courtesied several times while the nurse brought the baby to Edith's chair. But when Edith with her own hand put back the veil from the little stranger's face, his mother forgot her fear of the gentry and crept insensibly nearer and nearer until she stood at Edith's elbow.

"Oh, what a fine, big baby!" said Edith. "And how very strong he is. See him strike out. The little dear!"

She touched his velvet cheek with her finger and the baby grasped it in his sturdy, little fist and conveyed it to his mouth with every sign of satisfaction.

"Oh, oh!" said Edith, with a low laugh, which seldom sounded now. "See how he tugs at my finger! I can hardly drag it away."

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She lifted his long skirts as he kicked at them and released two strong legs, where the fat lay in creases. Dimples were in his knees, both socks were kicked off, and, in the utmost relief at the use of his legs, he cooed and crowed, with his rosy mouth gathered into a scarlet button of happiness.

"Why, did you ever see such a darling?" cried Edith.

The young mother colored with delight.

"If you please, your ladyship," she stammered, "may we beg the honor of naming him after the little viscount? His father and me both wishes to call him Geoffrey, if you don't think we are too bold."

Before Edith could answer, Sir John and Robert Gordon and Mayhew had all gone down in their pockets and fished out gold sovereigns.

"Why, I think it would be very nice," said Edith, looking around. "But haven't you waited a long time to christen him? He is such a big boy."

She looked down at the motionless bundle in her lap as she spoke.

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"Oh no, your ladyship," said the girl.
"He is only four weeks old to-day. I—"

She stopped, frozen by the sudden change in young Lady Mayhew's face. She pushed the baby away almost rudely and gathered her own up in her arms with sudden jealousy, pressing her cheek to the tiny face of her little son, who was not half the size of this peasant child.

"Her ladyship is tired," said the nurse.
"You'd better be going."

The young woman reached for her baby and started nervously. The three men pressed the gold into her hand as she passed them, and she courtesied, too much frightened to speak.

Edith saw the girl's hand tremble, and her heart smote her.

"Stop a moment," she said, and the girl turned around, her eyes humbly begging pardon for she knew not what.

"Let nurse give you the pillow and blankets from my boy's cradle for your boy to sleep on, and may they bring your little Geoffrey luck," said Edith, gently.

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"Oh, my lady!" cried the girl, with her sudden blush.

She gathered the soft blankets and lace-trimmed pillow with their embroidered coronets into her arms.

"May God be good to you and yours forever!" she said, with trembling lips.

"Amen!" said Sir John, solemnly.

Edith's face was hidden in her baby's filmy robe, as she tried in vain to keep her tears from being observed, but the dowager's eyes were sharp.

"There, there, Edith," she said. "Exercise a little more control over yourself. It's not so terrible to see a great, fat baby like that, that you need cry about it."

The cruelty of drawing attention to her grief was all that was needed to dry Edith's tears instantly. She laid the baby on her knee again and straightened herself in her chair.

"That's right," commented Lady Chartersea. "Your plain speaking always brings about decided results, Marcia. I only wish I had your firmness in dealing with Sir John."

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Firmness with the sick is very beneficial, but I have none of it. I can only advise others how to act."

This speech seemed to touch off the inflammable Sir John, as if his wife had fired a powder-magazine.

"Plain speaking!" snorted Sir John. "Gad! a little more of it and we'd all be dead and buried."

"Oh no, Sir John," remonstrated his wife. "Don't excite yourself, I beg. Surely you are an advocate of honesty at all times."

"Indeed, and I'm not, then," cried Sir John. "In a sick-room, or to keep a woman's mind tranquil, I'd be the damndest liar that ever trod the earth, and glory in meh crime, madam. That's what I advocate. Tact and consideration, if you choose to cover 'em up with words, but good, honest lies *I* call 'em, and deal in 'em, too, when necessary."

"I can't say I agree with you," said his wife, with the quiet stubbornness which invariably enraged Sir John. "I have always advised plain speaking, have I not, Marcia?"

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"Indeed you have, my dear Jane," said the dowager.

Sir John looked from the dowager to his wife, as if he could not decide which one it would give him the most satisfaction to rap over the nose. The discreet nurse, at a look from Edith, left the room.

"I should be sorry to think, madam," he said, addressing his wife with a sarcasm which hurtled harmlessly over her comprehension, "that you advocated the plain speaking at Cawdor which came so near plunging us all in deepest grief."

If Lady Chartersea had only possessed a little sense, but—

"Indeed, Sir John," she said, placidly, "I did just that. I agreed perfectly with Lady Mayhew that it was most reprehensible of you all to conceal from Edith the—"

Lady Chartersea never got to the end of her sentence. She seemed to awaken to her sense of danger by the blue flashes of lightning which flamed from Sir John's eyes.

"What!" he shouted, half springing from

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his chair. "You dare to tell me that you, *you* advised that inhuman cruelty!"

He stopped a moment, paralyzed by the torrent of his anger.

"There, Robert, let go meh arm. I am calm!" Sir John choked to prove it.

He fumbled for his glasses and drew from his pocket the long envelope, nodding his head in grim but agitated satisfaction. Archie stood by his wife's chair with his hand on her shoulder.

"Here, madam," said Sir John, peering at his wife through his glasses, "is my will—the last one I shall ever draw. I made it at Cawdor, and destroyed the other in the presence of witnesses."

Lady Chartersea's body stiffened in her chair as if galvanized. Her face became a yellowish white.

"These," said Sir John, "are stocks, securities, and shares in Abernethy's American mine, which are my christening present to Edith's boy. I have turned them over legally to Archie to hold in trust for the boy."

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Lady Chartersea put out her hand imploringly.

"Oh, Sir John!" she moaned.

"These mining shares yielded, for the first half-year, sixty-two per cent. dividend," said Sir John, with unctuous slowness.

"Sixty-two per cent.!" repeated his wife, with sudden energy. "Sir John, you must be mad to give such values away! Pray! Pray, stop to consider sister and me!"

"All of which," proceeded Sir John, "are already in the possession of Viscount Roxbridge."

He drew out his handkerchief and flourished it.

"Then, with the exception of your legal portion, madam—"

"My legal portion!" cried Lady Chartersea.

"That is what I said, madam, your legal portion—"

"But that is a mere pittance, compared with all your wealth, Sir John. Surely, you mean to leave me your personal property besides?"

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"Your legal portion only, under the laws of Great Britain, is all that I have left to you," said Sir John, with a silent chuckle of deep content. "That and a few legacies to old servants—"

"And sister?" cried his wife, anxiously.

"Not a penny to 'sister'! Robert gets the only large legacy."

Lady Chartersea burst into tears, but Sir John continued without a pause:

"And small legacies to each of Tessie's babies whom she named after Edith—"

Lady Chartersea snatched away her handkerchief to glare at Tessie, who only colored under the silent attack.

"With these exceptions all my property goes to Edith Cavendish's boy—every farthing of it, and a small return it is to him for all that lies behind him and all that lies before him and his blessed mother. Edith, meh girl, God bless you!"

Sir John buried his face in his handkerchief and blew his nose tempestuously.

"Not one of my girls remembered!" said the dowager.

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"Not one," repeated Sir John, cheerfully.

"A most infamous will," cried Lady Chartersea.

"A most shocking exhibition of revenge," added the dowager. But, to her astonishment, Lady Chartersea turned on her.

"And, most of all, I owe it to you, Lady Mayhew," she said, "for, if I had not aided and abetted you in your hatred of your American daughter-in-law, I would have been residuary legatee myself."

"Quite true, madam," said Sir John, smiling and rubbing his hands. "In the will I destroyed at Cawdor, you *were* residuary legatee."

"Oh, infamous!" cried Lady Chartersea. "Infamous, I say!"

"If you are referring to your conduct from Cairo to this hour, madam, I can agree with you without reserve," said Sir John, whose good humor increased every moment.

"You have lost me thousands of pounds," cried Lady Chartersea to the dowager, waxing more and more furious.

"Say hundreds of thousands, meh dear,"

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said Sir John, enjoying himself hugely. "And increasing every year."

"I shall never," exclaimed Lady Chartersea, rising to her feet and trembling with anger, "forgive you, Lady Mayhew, nor see you again as long as I live."

"Quite a proper spirit, madam, upon meh word," cried her husband.

"And I leave this house to - night," continued Lady Chartersea, "never to return to it."

"Can we bear it?" cried Sir John, wickedly, looking in alarm at Edith and Archie. Edith shook her head at him, but warnings were in vain. Sir John was off, and there was no stopping him.

"I shall have your man pack your things at once, Sir John," said Lady Chartersea, going towards the door.

"Spare him the trouble, meh dear, for he'd only be obliged to unpack them again in an hour. I'm going to stop here for a week," cried Sir John. "But don't let me detain you. Robert, you will see your sister safely back to Arlesworth, won't you?"

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"With pleasure," said Robert Gordon.

"You cannot detain me," said Lady Chartersea, who, having once made up her mind that Sir John was so devoted to her that a separation between them was impossible, would die clinging to that belief, "because I am going to escape from the perfidious company of the Dowager Countess of Mayhew."

"You will be obliged to go, then," said the dowager, stung by the sarcasm into premature boasting, "for I am stopping at Mintern indefinitely."

And, indeed, she believed it.

"Not so fast, mother, if you please," said Archie, quietly, still with his hand on his wife's shoulder. "You and the girls are to leave for Dower House to-morrow by the morning train. I have given orders to that effect, and wired for your servants to expect you."

Lady Chartersea paused at the door and burst into a cackle of mirthless laughter at the dowager's face, and, indeed, her expression of dismay was irresistible. She

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gave one look into her son's steel-blue eyes and then turned supplicatingly to Edith.

"Edith, child," she said, brokenly, "make him unsay those words. You don't know what Dower House is—so far away. I could never see you nor help you with the baby. Don't let him exile me. It is worse than exile. We shall be marooned, I and the girls! You want me to stay, don't you, Edith?"

"Indeed, Lady Mayhew," said Edith, in a low voice, but trembling visibly, "I do *not* want you to stay! I should die if you were to live here. For when I saw that dimpled, happy baby just now, with only deep creases for wrists and ankles, and realized that but for you I should see my boy the same—when I heard that baby coo and crow with happiness and health, and then realized that I have never, in all the four months of his little life, heard my baby's voice except raised in a feeble wail of pain—may God forgive me, Lady Mayhew, but I thought I never wanted to see your face again."

The dowager stared at Edith with dropped

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jaw. Her unemployed eye was rolling wildly. Then, without a word, but followed by the cracked laughter of Lady Chartersea, the dowager turned and left the room by another door. She reached up feebly and took a valuable painting on ivory from the wall as she passed. She had always admired it.

At this moment Cephyse and the nurse entered the room. The nurse took the sleeping baby, and Edith leaned back in her chair white and trembling. While the others were hastily going, Sir John came over to Edith, and, flinging the securities into her lap, he whispered:

"Has it been too much for you, Edith? What a selfish brute I was to take my revenge on her before you!"

"No, Sir John. I was wicked enough to enjoy it. There is no danger, you see, of my dying. I am too bad."

"Gad!" chuckled Sir John, "I haven't enjoyed mehsself so much in years. Talk about the theatre, Archie. What play could touch it when those two old women fell on each other? Now, I'm going, Edith. Not a word

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more from you until to-morrow. I kiss your hand, meh dear."

Cephyse bore her mistress into her apartments and knelt in front of her and unlaced the white velvet boots, which would have been clumsy on any but fairy feet, and soothed her mistress with cooing words, as one would talk to a sick child. Then she put her to bed, but, in flitting silently around the room, she noticed that Lady Mayhew's eyes were wide open, and held the same expression in their depths which had terrified them all at Cawdor. So, then, Cephyse, whose adoration for her mistress was something to wonder at, came and sat down by the bed and held Lady Mayhew's hands in both her own and threaded her hair with her magnetic fingers. Then, feeling the tension in Lady Mayhew's frail body relax, Cephyse began to sing in a low voice a little French *berceuse* which Edith loved, and gradually her eyelids drooped and she slept.

Fatigue caused her to sleep straight through the night, so that she never knew of the dowager's pilferings that evening, nor of

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the trinkets and small *objets d'art* which left Mintern securely concealed in the dowager's boxes, which, however, were returned to her the next week by the girls, with the line: "Mother hooked these from Mintern, but we return them while she is out with the curate to lecture poachers. We thought you might like to have the gold toilet-set yourself. Love and love and love!"

Edith was awakened after her long sleep by whispering at the door of her room. It was Cephyse refusing to let the girls in to say good-bye.

"Let them come, Cephyse," she said, and instantly they broke past the maid and flung themselves upon Edith, with tears and kisses.

"You shall come back," she promised them, "and we will take you abroad for your holidays, and not Tessie but *I* will present you at court—if I ever get strong again."

"Oh, you dear! You dear!" they wailed.

The dowager's sharp voice called them, and, after a last tempestuous round of em-

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braces, they tore themselves away, and presently the carriage doors slammed below, the gravel crunched under the horses' feet, and they were off.

Cephyse was watching from behind the curtains, unaware that her mistress could see her. When the carriage passed from view, she lifted her skirts and gave a most expressive little kick in the direction of the dowager's unconscious back.

"Va donc!" she hissed, under her breath.

CHAPTER XIII

YOUNG Lady Mayhew's American spirit prevailed, and little Roxbridge throve. Edith's life was no longer her own, but was spent in flitting from English baths to the south of France, thence to the lakes of Italy, and once, when Abernethy's pleadings convinced her, she actually took him to a ranch in Wyoming, where his strength grew rapidly.

His young aunts adored him and spent half their time with the Mayhews, but the dowager never again was asked either to Mintern or Arlesworth.

From the hour, however, of Edith's rebuff, the dowager's respect for her increased, until she bored her friends to extinction by her tiresome praises of her American daughter-in-law. Such spirit! Such firmness! Such admirable devotion to Roxbridge, who was growing into such a fine lad!

THE DOWAGER COUNTESS

Not all Edith's gentleness and forbearance had availed her like that one spirited outburst which forever put her mother-in-law out of her life.

It has often been observed, as a curious freak of nature, that at a boys' school when the reigning bully has been soundly thrashed by a stripling new-comer, the bully, instead of planning revenge, becomes the proud satellite and faithful fag of the stripling new-comer.

So Edith's youth became womanhood, and other boys and girls came to bear young Roxbridge company and to be his brothers and sisters, but none was like the first-born, either to others or to his mother.

Between these two was an invisible chain of understanding, born of their fight together for life and the liberty to wax strong. It could be seen in their actions towards each other, in their subtle comprehension of each other's moods, and the thoughts which in each human soul lie too deep for words. And often the boy's father would be struck by the way in which the lad, in obedience to

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an unspoken wish from his mother, would leave his play and come and lean upon her knee and gaze into her eyes without speaking, but with an understanding look, as if there existed between them a mysterious bond which was only understood by those two and God.

THE END

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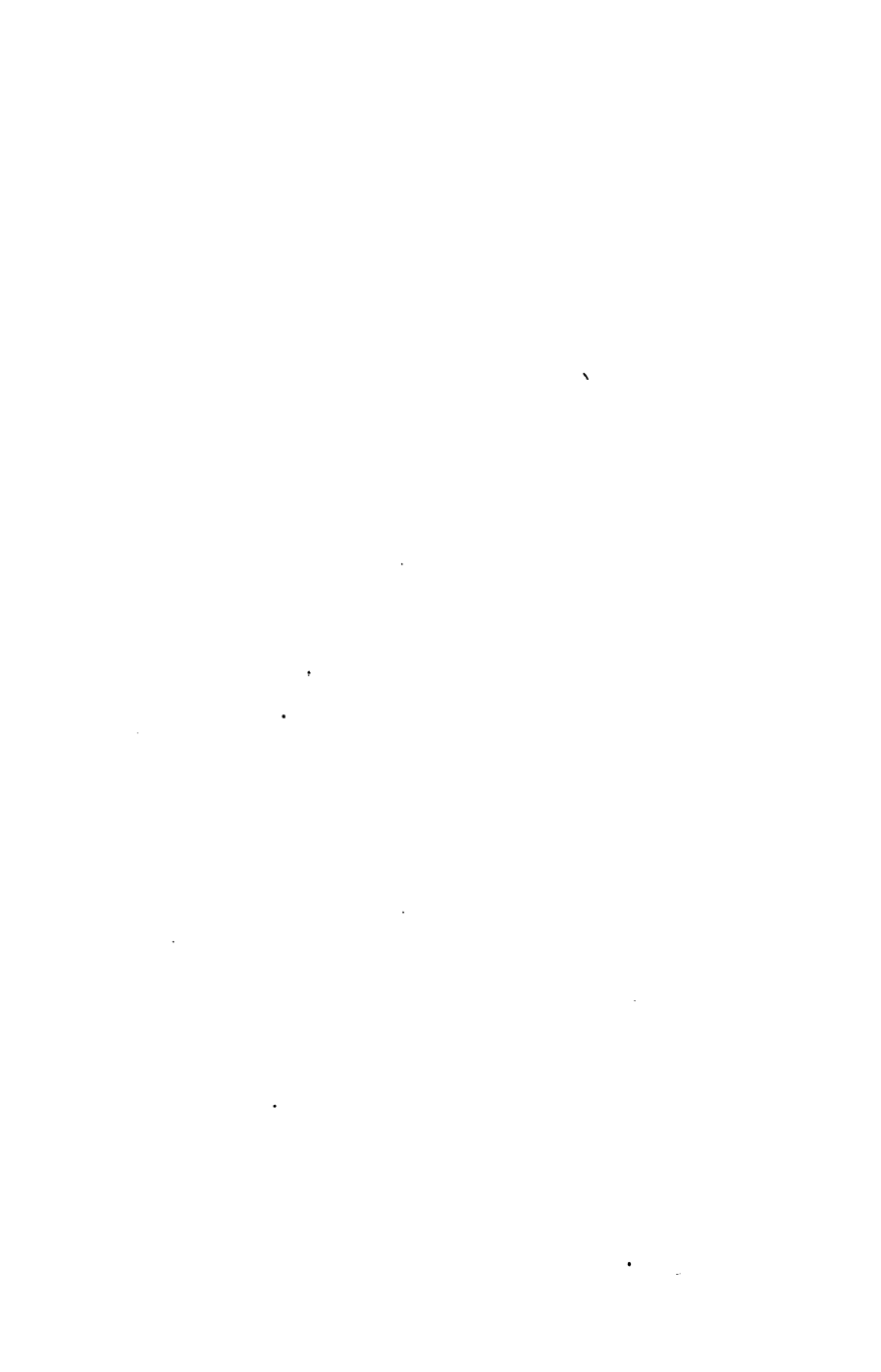
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